

Protecting Our Waterways

About our waterways

Waterways are important to both the natural environment and human activities. We can all play a role in keeping our waterways, catchments and oceans clean and healthy for future generations as well as the plants and animals that rely on them.

Waterways include water that is above and below the ground. Water is stored above ground in creeks and rivers, and below the ground in the water table. The water table is the level underground where all the spaces around rocks and soil are completely filled with water. This water table depth can change across locations, seasons or the amount of water that is used.

Uses of waterways

Waterways are very important to the health of people, our food sources, aquatic species and the environment. We all need to take responsibility for looking after our waterways. Some of the important uses of waterways include:

- Source of food production
- Aesthetic values and educational resource
- Aquatic species for commercial food consumption
- Providing food and habitat to important marine ecosystems
- Supporting life, including terrestrial ecosystems, as all living things require water
- Recreation activities such as fishing and swimming
- Source of transport and a filtration system for stormwater

Issues in waterways

Human activity is a major cause of water pollution. Anything we place down the sink or drains in our homes will end up in our waters. Unsustainable water use, land clearing and urban development have also placed stress on our waterways. Some of the challenges that have resulted are:

- Balancing the environmental, social and economic goals for sustainable use of the waterways
- The economic and community costs of decreasing water quality
- The increase in land clearing, soil erosion, water and soil salinity as well as littering and weed invasion to previously balanced ecosystems
- The loss of native plants and animals near creeks and rivers
- Cigarette butts which wash into our drains and end up in creeks, rivers and beaches. Cigarette butts are a major source of pollution in waterways.



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What you can do to keep our waterways healthy

Daily activities have an effect on water quality. Our waterways are connected and you can help protect the quality of water quality in your local area by:

Car

- Washing the car on grass or at the car wash to avoid unwanted chemical detergents and dirt going down the drain.
- Fixing oil leaks that are dripping from your car to prevent oil and chemicals entering waterways.



Garden

- Not using herbicides or pesticides as they can end up in our creeks. Use organic products that will work the same and are environmentally safe.
- Decreasing the amount of garden waste by composting or using it as mulch in your garden.
- Sweeping your footpath and gutter instead of hosing them to prevent dirt, grass and other waste going down the drain. Garden waste washing down storm drains ends up in our waterways where it can cause weed and algae growth.



Home

- Disposing of household chemicals, oils, paints and pesticides at one of Council's Chemical Cleanout collection days. Never pour them down the sink. Chemical and oils create problems by blocking drains and polluting waterways when poured down the sink.
- Storing chemicals and paints properly and only buy what you need.
- Rinsing brushes used for water-based paints on the grass and throwing away paint brushes used with oil-based paint.



Litter

- Placing all litter and cigarette butts in the bin or taking your rubbish home with you when you are out.
- Cleaning up after your dog and disposing of waste in the bin to prevent polluting our waterways with bacteria.
- Participating in clean up days in your local area to keep our parks and creeks clean.



Acknowledgements

1. Midcoast Water <http://www.midcoastwater.com.au>
2. Environment Protection Authority Victoria <http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/water>
3. NSW Office of Environment & Heritage <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/water/index.htm>