

# Water Pollution

This factsheet provides information about water pollution and how to report concerns about suspected water pollution activity. Water pollution occurs when harmful substances contaminate groundwater, stream, river lake or an ocean. This can result in environmental damage, poisoned wildlife, and human health problems.

## How does water pollution occur?

Industry may be a source of water pollution. Sediment and soil erosion from building and development sites can also be major sources of water pollution. Other sources include septic/wastewater systems, households, streets and footpaths.

Individuals pollute water by littering (including cigarette butts), pouring oils down drains, washing cars, cleaning paint brushes, and using chemicals on their gardens. These pollutants are then washed or blown into stormwater drains and local waterways, causing harm to natural ecosystems and reducing the quality of the water essential for use by people and industry.

Under the Environmental Protection legislation, it is an offence (whether wilfully or unwilfully) to:

- deposit a prescribed water contaminant into stormwater drains, roadside gutters or waterways;
- deposit a prescribed water contaminant in a place where it could potentially wash, blow, fall or move into stormwater drains, roadside gutters or waterways;
- release stormwater run-off which results in the build-up of earth in stormwater drains, roadside gutters, or waterways.

## What are the impacts of water pollution?

Water pollution can result in environmental damage, poisoned wildlife, and human health problems.

Rubbish such as plastic can choke and kill animals living in or near waterways.

Land clearance and extraction for agriculture, forestry management and new developments can cause soil to erode. After rain, surface water runoff carries this soil and anything it contains into waterways. This can cause:

- silt to build up in the waterway;
- algal blooms to grow, which creates areas of low oxygen that fish and aquatic life cannot thrive in;
- death of aquatic plants and animals.

Chemicals and other contaminants in the water can also have negative effects on our health. Waste discharge into the South Burnett water catchments and underground water aquifers may flow into the coastal waterway systems with harmful effects on aquatic wildlife.

## How does Council address water pollution concerns?

Council investigates most water pollution incidents under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*. Council only has jurisdiction to investigate certain complaints and shares the responsibility of investigating and enforcing water pollution issues with other government agencies.

State Government agencies will investigate major environmental incidents.

## How can I take to reduce my contribution to water pollution?

- take waste to your local waste transfer station or landfill;
- reducing your plastic consumption, for example choose tap water instead of bottled;
- take a proactive approach to recycling and reusing plastic;
- put rubbish in a bin rather than litter the streets;
- limit the use of fertilisers, pesticides, and herbicides and ensure any other chemicals don't wash into stormwater drains;
- don't dump garden and lawn clippings near waterways – use your green organics bin;
- take care when refuelling and maintaining boats to avoid spilling fuel and oils;
- empty boat sewage holding tanks at sewage dump points or at a Council-approved locations;
- collect, store, and recycle used car motor oil, paints, or solvents – don't put them down the sewer or stormwater drain;
- buy detergents, cleaning agents and washing powders that are low in phosphates;
- wash cars on the lawn and not on the driveway or road to minimise detergents running down the stormwater drain;
- pressure cleaning – ensure stormwater (downpipes) are disconnected to avoid run-off into storm water system.

## How do I report a concern regarding Water Pollution?

If your request is in regards to pollution and sediment from a State Government or Council development site, contact the [Department of Environment and Heritage Protection](#) on 1300 130 372.

For other requests, submit a customer request with Council by one (1) of the following methods:

- ✉ South Burnett Regional Council  
PO Box 336  
KINGAROY QLD 4610  
(07) 4189 9100
- @ [info@sbrc.qld.gov.au](mailto:info@sbrc.qld.gov.au)
- 👤 Visit a Customer Service Centre