

Fact Sheet

Water Pollution

Water is a scarce and essential natural resource. Conserving and maintaining water quality is especially important in Australia, the world's driest inhabited continent. Preventing or reducing water pollution protects our water quality and is essential to maintaining the health of our environment and our own quality of life. Contaminants such as silt and mud may cause failure of the stormwater system and flooding issues, while chemical contaminants may harm aquatic animals.

Role of Council

Legislation requires Council to respond to complaints received. This response will depend on the complaint history, current compliance status and the risk of the alleged offence.

Council may:

- Send an advisory letter and fact sheet to both the alleged offender and the complainant
- Conduct an onsite investigation.

The Law

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.

Failure to comply with requirements may result in one or more of the following enforcement actions:

- A letter being issued requiring action or work to be conducted
- A legal notice being issued requiring action to be taken or work to be conducted
- A Penalty Infringement Notice (*also known as a PIN or on-the-spot fine*) being issued to the value of 15 penalty units (individual) or up to 75 penalty units (corporation)
- Prosecution

Protecting the Environment

We can all help protect our waterways by not releasing prescribed water contaminants into stormwater, roadside gutters or bodies of water.

Prescribed water contaminants include pollutants such as: chemicals, oils, paint, water from cleaning roofs or other surfaces, waste water from a washing machine, rubbish, concrete, sediment, mulch and sewerage residues.

Note: for a complete list of prescribed water contaminants, refer to the *Environmental Protection Regulation 2008*.

To help prevent these pollutants from entering our waterways and other bodies of water, it is recommended that:

- Any waste water (from washing cars, building surfaces, animals, paths etc.) is diverted to vegetated areas
- Rubbish is contained and disposed of correctly
- Sediment and mulch are stabilised and protected from being released, particularly in the event of rainfall

Other Helpful tips

When conducting outdoor clean you should:

- Always keep a spill response kit (including a shovel, broom and rags) to clean up residues nearby. Do not wash or hose remaining waste material into the stormwater drain.