

Water

Fact sheet



Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA Victoria) is the state's independent environmental regulator. Under the powers of the *Environment Protection Act 1970*, EPA is responsible for protecting the environment and the community through effective regulation of industry and pollution. EPA's vision is a healthy environment that supports a liveable and prosperous Victoria. As part of its *5 Year Plan* EPA is committed to improving groundwater quality, as well as ensuring the condition of marine and freshwater systems are improved.

What is water pollution?

Water pollution is the contamination of water bodies such as a lake, river, stream or marine environment. Water pollution occurs when pollutants are discharged directly or indirectly into a waterway without adequate treatment to remove harmful compounds.

Victoria's water environments are amongst our most valuable assets. The unique rivers, wetlands, estuaries and coasts are home to millions of creatures, from tiny plankton to fish, dolphins, birds and whales, including animals that migrate here each year from across the globe.

Unfortunately, the solid and liquid waste people drop on the ground or dump in drains eventually ends up in a water environment somewhere. Rain washes pollutants and waste from our streets into drains which ultimately cause water pollution.

EPA's role in regulating water pollution

EPA has a key role in protecting the community from water pollution through:

- the use of environmental laws, policies and regulatory controls to protect the water environment
- ensuring water is safe for humans, animals and plants, and suitable for other important uses, like swimming

- administering more specific laws to protect water environments, including the *Pollution of Waters by Oil and Noxious Substances Act 1986*, which deals with waste such as oil, chemicals and litter from ships
- running a range of programs aimed at improving the quality of water environments and preventing water pollution.

Water quality information

Monitoring the marine environment

In the marine environment, EPA monitors and reports on 14 fixed sites in Port Phillip Bay, Western Port Bay, and the Gippsland Lakes.

Beach Report program

Beach Report provides information on water quality at 36 beaches in Port Phillip Bay in the summer, giving up-to-date information on water quality from December to March. As a general precaution, EPA advises people not to swim near stormwater drains, rivers, streams and other outlets into the bay during rain, and for at least 24-48 hours afterwards.

Yarra Watch

Yarra Watch provides recreational water quality monitoring information for the Yarra River. Melbourne Water collects weekly E.coli samples at 14 sites from the Docklands to the upper reaches of the river at Millgrove near Warburton. Yarra Watch divides the river into three sections - lower, middle and upper - and provides information for each site.

**PUBLICATION 1470
JULY 2012**

Authorised and published by
EPA Victoria, 200 Victoria Street, Carlton.

REPORTING WATER POLLUTION

To report water pollution call EPA's 24-hour Pollution Hotline on **1300 EPA VIC (1300 372 842)**.

If you see something suspicious flowing into a stormwater drain, in a local waterway or our marine environment report it.

Visit epa.vic.gov.au for further information on water pollution.

Water

The information is updated on EPA's website weekly. Additional warnings are issued when heavy rain or pollution incidents are expected to significantly affect water quality in the Yarra.

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Protecting our water environments

EPA works with organisations such as local councils and Life Saving Victoria, as well as the community and other government agencies to ensure our water environments are protected from pollution threats and our water resources are preserved.

Stormwater pollution management

Protecting the quality of our stormwater is everyone's business; we can all do simple things to reduce pollution like picking up litter and preventing spills in the workplace. Cleaner stormwater also provides new opportunities for stormwater harvesting and re-use. This helps to protect our precious water reserves.

Wastewater management

A key role of EPA in protecting our water environment is the regulation of wastewater management activities, such as sewage treatment plants and other industrial discharges. EPA achieves this through the use of compliance tools like works approvals and licences to ensure the construction and ongoing operation of these activities and premises meet appropriate management and water quality standards.

