

WHY DO WE NEED TO PROTECT OUR WATER?

We all value and use water and water environments in different ways: for drinking; for swimming and fishing; to irrigate land and produce food; and for shipping and boating. All these uses depend on safe, clean water, which in turn depends on healthy aquatic ecosystems. We need to protect our water to protect ourselves, our way of living and our future.

Victoria's water environments are a priceless community asset. They include coasts, alpine streams, wide rivers winding through productive agricultural regions, seagrass meadows and kelp forests, and floodplain wetlands.

WHAT IS THE CONDITION OF OUR WATER ENVIRONMENTS?

Our rivers, wetlands and coastal waters are in varying condition. Some streams have been stripped of vegetation and starved of water while others are in near pristine condition.

Coastal waters in general are in better health but all of our major bays and smaller estuaries still need protection.

Our water environments will never return to the state they were in 200 years ago, but they can be managed to sustain the natural processes required for a healthy aquatic ecosystem.

EPA Contact Numbers

POLLUTION WATCH LINE

9695 2777 (Country Callers 1800 444 004)

LITTER REPORT LINE

1800 352 555

SMOKY VEHICLE REPORTS

9695 2755 (country callers 1800 444 051)

– www.epa.vic.gov.au/Reporting –



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Protecting Victoria's Waters



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HOW CAN A POLICY HELP?

Victorians use and value water for a variety of environmental, social and economic needs.

The State environment protection policy (Waters of Victoria) sets standards that are used to ensure these uses are protected and includes actions we can all undertake to protect our rivers, wetlands and coastal waters.

MAJOR ACTIONS THE POLICY SUPPORTS

Reducing wastes and increasing water recycling

Wastes can enter water environments from many sources, including discharges from wastewater treatment plants serving cities and towns; poorly maintained septic tanks; and spills, illegal discharges and waste dumping.

The Waters of Victoria policy puts an obligation on us all to minimise waste discharges to waterways by avoiding or minimising waste generation, and by reusing and recycling water whenever possible. Spills need to be avoided by good planning and operating practices.

Water conservation and management

Using less water means there is more available to maintain the health of rivers, lakes, wetlands and estuaries and for our enjoyment when we go fishing, boating and swimming.

All water bodies need sufficient flow, at the right time of year, to maintain their health. The policy puts in place review and auditing provisions to ensure that these flows are provided.



The policy requires Victoria's ports and marinas to be managed in a sustainable manner by, for example, putting in place actions to minimise impacts of shipping and port activities.



Urban stormwater can also impact on waterways and beaches, by transporting litter, oil, nutrients and sediment. The policy requires these impacts be reduced through joint efforts by local and State government and the public.

Catchment management

Because of the extent of land used for agricultural purposes there is great potential for impact on waterways. For example, salt, sediment and nutrients can all enter waterways in excessive quantities.

The policy requires public and private land managers to take steps to prevent pollution of waters, by implementing good irrigation and agricultural practices that use water efficiently, by minimising any waste discharges to water and by revegetating streams.



Runoff from roads, forestry and construction can pollute waterways, particularly through the runoff of soils to rivers and streams. The policy provides guidance on how these activities can be managed to prevent the pollution of waterways.

The state environment protection policy (Waters of Victoria) clearly identifies the major threats to Victoria's waters, the actions we need to take to protect and enhance them, and allows us to measure progress towards achieving a sustainable water environment.

TIPS FOR PROTECTING VICTORIA'S WATER

- Conserve water around the house and garden. Install water efficient appliances, use less water, and maintain a water efficient garden.
- Make sure only rain goes down the drain. No detergent, leaves, paint, oil, or other objectionable matter.
- Report litterers and polluters to the EPA (see back page for contact details).
- Contact EPA about becoming involved in a neighbourhood environment improvement plan.

EPA is working with government, industry and the public to protect Victoria's water. For more information on Victoria's water environments visit www.epa.vic.gov.au/Water

Copies of the policy and policy impact assessment are available through EPA's Information Centre or online at www.epa.vic.gov.au/Publications



because this is our home