



Stormwater pollution from residential areas

The stormwater system

The stormwater system carries rain from your driveway, paved areas, car parks and streets directly to our creeks, lakes and rivers without treatment. The *Environment Protection Act 1997* aims to protect these aquatic environments by keeping stormwater as clean as possible.

The stormwater system is separate from the sewerage system. Inside your house the kitchen sink, laundry, toilet and bathroom drains are connected to the sewer, or septic tank in un-sewered areas. You may also have a sewer connection under your outside tap via a gully trap. All other areas where rainfall collects, including roof drains, should be connected to the stormwater system.

Pollution in the stormwater system

Stormwater can carry pollution to our creeks, lakes and rivers. For instance lawn clippings or leaves that get swept into the gutter can enter the stormwater system causing undesirable nutrients to be added to our aquatic environments and contribute to outbreaks of blue green algae.

The most visible form of stormwater pollution is litter and rubbish. However, contaminants such as soil, oil and grease, animal faeces, organic matter, detergents, chemicals and fertilisers also pollute our stormwater. Such pollution can result in fish kills, algal blooms, unsafe swimming conditions, the accumulation of toxins in aquatic animals, or unsightly creeks, lakes and rivers.

Vehicle and equipment washing

When water restrictions allow, wash your car and other equipment on grassed or gravelled areas so that water and detergents can soak into the ground and do not enter the stormwater system. Commercial vehicles and equipment must be washed in a commercial car wash facility if there is not an appropriate grassed or gravelled area available.

To reduce stormwater pollution from cars, ensure your vehicle does not leak oil or any other fluids, including coolants.

Wastewater disposal

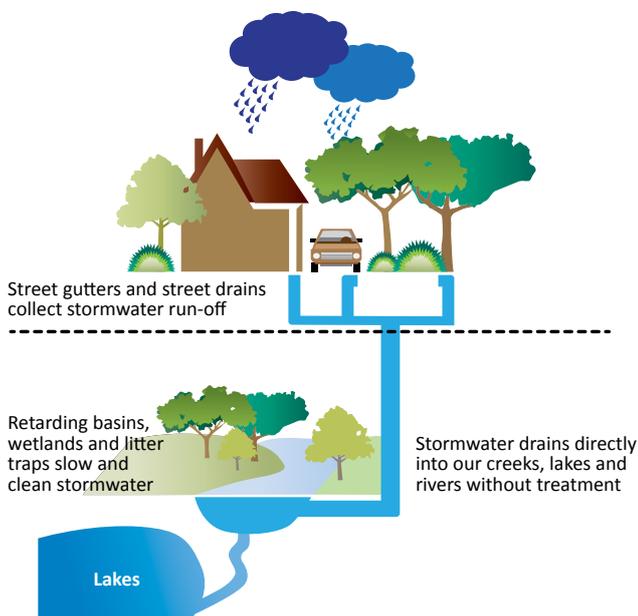
Wastewater is any water used or contaminated as a result of your activities. Wastewaters or wash down waters from cleaning operations must not be discharged to the stormwater system. Wash down water volumes should be minimised and directed to soakage areas in the garden or lawn.

Sweep, rather than hosing down driveways and paths, to avoid creating discharges to the stormwater system. Place sweepings in the garden or compost.

Landscaping

Direct run-off to garden and lawn areas when landscaping. Ensure building footings are adequately protected and any excess water is disposed of appropriately.

The Stormwater System



Gardening

Ensure green waste does not enter the stormwater system. Sweep grass cuttings and leaves from street gutters, footpaths and driveways and put them in your compost, garden or take them free of charge to:

- Corkhill Brothers at Mugga Lane Resource Management Centre
- Canberra Sand and Gravel at Parkwood Road Recycling Estate or
- Canberra Sand and Gravel at Mitchell for a small fee.

Avoid using garden chemicals (pesticides, fertilisers, etc) where they could enter the stormwater system. See Hazardous Waste in your Home information sheet for disposal options.

Ensure areas around your yard and in front of your house are maintained so that soil, mulch, gravel, etc do not enter the stormwater system. If you plan on placing landscaping materials on the nature strip you must first gain approval from Territory and Municipal Services Directorate (via Canberra Connect 13 22 81) for use of this land.

Animal faeces

Dog faeces wash from footpaths and driveways to the stormwater system directly into our creeks, lakes and rivers, and pose a health threat to swimmers.

Owners are responsible for cleaning up after their pets, especially while out walking their dogs. Collect all faeces and then bury them in the garden or dispose of them in a sealed bag in the general waste.

Swimming pools and spas

If the pool needs to be emptied, the water should not be directed to stormwater. Empty the pool gradually to allow the water to soak into grass or garden beds (ensuring water does not go onto neighbouring properties).

Home handy people

Make sure any stockpiled material (e.g. mulch, soil, or sand) is prevented from entering the stormwater system. A cover can be used to contain the material. Materials must not be stored near the stormwater system. A silt fence or similar barrier should be used to filter water and stop soil from entering the stormwater system.

Paint stripping, sawdust, and other building wastes should be collected and disposed of in general waste.

Wastewater from washing paintbrushes, brick cutting and other problem wastes must not be allowed into the stormwater system. Instead, dispose of wastewater by tipping it onto a flat, grassy area or an area that will retain liquid. Dried solid waste can then be disposed of in general waste.

Paint containing lead was used in many Australian homes prior to 1970, but those built more recently may also present a risk to your health.

Anyone painting a house or doing maintenance that could disturb paint containing lead should avoid exposing themselves and their families, neighbours and pets to its hazards. You can find more information in the Department of Environment Booklet, Lead Alert: The six step guide to painting your home www.environment.gov.au/protection/publications/lead-alert-six-step-guide-painting-your-home.

Rainwater tanks

Rainwater tanks contribute to the protection of the environment. They do this by reducing run-off and by slowing the flow of stormwater from our urban environment, so fewer pollutants are transported into our creeks, lakes and rivers. Consider installing a rainwater tank to provide water for your garden, wash your car, top up your swimming pool, or with additional plumbing, to connect to your toilet or washing machine.

Your legal responsibility

Under the Act, it is an offence for a person to allow any substance other than rainwater to enter the stormwater system. Contraventions of the Act can lead to an on-the-spot-fine of up to \$200 for an individual, or \$1,000 for a company. More serious offenses can lead to penalties of up to \$50,000, six months in jail and a criminal record.

For more information

Contact the Environment Protection Authority by calling Canberra Connect on 13 22 81.

Go to environment.act.gov.au for more information relating to water pollution

- [Protect your environment](#)
- [Water Quality Environment Protection Policy](#)
- [Hazardous Waste in Your Home](#)