



## Environment Protection (Water Quality) Policy 2003

### *Frequently Asked Questions*

#### **What is the difference between the Water Quality Policy and water restrictions?**

The Water Quality Policy deals with the *quality* of South Australia's fresh, marine and ground waters. It describes what can and cannot be put into the State's waters and what people need to do to keep our waters clean.

Water restrictions deal with the *quantity* of water that people are allowed to use and when they are allowed to use it. Water restrictions are applied by the State Government and SA Water. For more information on water restrictions visit the SA Water web site at [www.sawater.com.au](http://www.sawater.com.au) or phone 1800 130 952.

#### **Can I be fined for washing my car on the street?**

Yes. Under the new Water Quality Policy you may be fined for washing your car on the street in certain circumstances. If you wash a muddy car with a hose and detergent on the street or on a concrete (or similar) driveway you may be fined. If the car is only slightly soiled and it is rinsed on the street using a bucket without detergent, a fine may be avoided. However, when you wash a vehicle you must also obey the current level of water restrictions. For more information on water restrictions visit the SA Water web site at [www.sawater.com.au](http://www.sawater.com.au) or phone 1800 130 952.

Ideally, you should wash your car using a bucket and/or trigger hose on a grassed or gravel area which allows the water to soak into the ground. Alternatively, you could use a commercial car wash which directs wastewater to the sewer, via pre-treatment facilities.

#### **Can I be fined for dumping garden waste into the gutter?**

Yes. Lawn cuttings and leaves break down in water, reducing the oxygen levels of the waterways and creating toxic gases, both of which threaten the lives of fish and other aquatic organisms.

You must:

- sweep up garden wastes from street gutters, footpaths and driveways and dispose of them to your compost or garden, or take them to a green waste recycling depot
- contain garden mulch by using garden edging or bunding, or by placing wire or rocks over mulch on verges or garden edges so it won't enter the street gutters.

### **Can I be fined if I over-water my garden?**

It is highly unlikely this activity would lead to a fine. However, if the run-off from the garden into the stormwater system or natural waters is substantial, a fine may apply. This is because tap-water contains chlorine, and garden run-off can contain pesticides and fertilisers, all of which are harmful to the environment.

Some tips are:

- Don't over-water your garden—you can avoid this by using a timer.
- Make sure run-off from sprinklers and taps is kept to a minimum and doesn't flow into the drains or gutters.
- Use fertilisers and chemicals sparingly and never near drains and natural waterways.

When watering your garden you must also obey the current level of water restrictions. For more information on water restrictions visit the SA Water web site at [www.sawater.com.au](http://www.sawater.com.au) or phone 1800 130 952.

### **Can I be fined for stockpiling sand or gravel in a driveway or near the street?**

No. You are allowed to appropriately stockpile building materials anywhere on your property. However, if material is washed or blown into the stormwater system you may be fined.

You must:

- keep the sand and gravel away from the street and steep areas where it can be washed or blown into the drain
- minimise the risk of erosion by placing a cover over the materials
- if necessary, protect the stockpile from run-on water by placing diversion banks up-slope and a bund or trench down-slope.

### **Can I be fined for washing animal droppings from the footpath or driveway into the gutter?**

Yes. The gutter is connected to the stormwater system where water flows untreated into our natural waterways. Animal droppings are harmful to freshwater and marine environments.

- Dog owners must collect all droppings and dispose of them in a sealed bag to the waste collection, or bury them in the garden.
- Owners of other animals, including chickens, rabbits, birds, horses and cows, must collect faeces from all animal enclosures regularly and either provide them to fertiliser/garden companies, bury them in the garden, or dispose of them in a sealed bag to the waste collection.
- Horse owners should also collect manure from paved areas and dispose of it appropriately.

### **Can I be fined for hosing down my driveway and footpath?**

Yes. Although it is unlikely you will be fined for this activity under the Water Quality Policy householders and businesses should note the following. Dirt (including soils, clays and sand), chlorine found in tap water, and the toxic substances found on driveways (oil,

coolant etc) are all pollutants under the Water Quality Policy. Therefore, if a substantial amount of water or dirt flows into the stormwater system while you are doing this activity a fine may apply.

You should also note that hosing down a driveway or footpath is not permitted in most circumstances when water restrictions apply. For more information on water restrictions visit the SA Water web site at [www.sawater.sa.com.au](http://www.sawater.sa.com.au) or phone 1800 130 952.

Householders and businesses should dry-sweep dirty driveways and paths to prevent polluting the stormwater system. Once the waste is swept up it should be deposited into the garden, compost or waste bin.

Dry sweeping also helps to conserve water, saves you money, and should help you to avoid receiving a fine.

### **Can I be fined if my septic tank overflows?**

Yes. Overflowing septic tanks and underground soakage trenches transfer nutrients and bacteria into creeks, and are a hazard to human health and the environment.

You must ensure that your septic tank is cleaned of sludge at least every three years, even if it is connected to a septic tank effluent disposal scheme (STEDS).

### **Can a fine be issued if the pollution was accidental?**

Yes. The environment does not recognise if pollution is accidental or deliberate, the harmful effects are still the same. The community has a duty to act responsibly and take all reasonable care not to harm the environment.

### **Can vehicle workshops, service stations and depots be fined for allowing polluted run-off to flow into the stormwater system?**

Yes. Polluted water must not be directly or indirectly discharged into the stormwater system.

- Water from the floor of covered work areas must be isolated from the stormwater system by changing the surface grades and installing bunds and/or catch drains. For further information, refer to the EPA Guideline *Bunding and Spill Management*.
- All activities involving fuel, oil, grease, coolant, chemicals, solvents and/or cleaning agents that could leak or spill should provide drainage to undercover areas that contain an approved wastewater pre-treatment device connected to a sewer, or to a storage facility for collection by a licensed liquid waste contractor.
- Wastewater or washwater must be pre-treated and directed into the sewer (with approval from SA Water) or stored in tanks and collected by a licensed liquid waste contractor.

Wastewater can also be minimised by using dry absorbents on spills and dry-sweeping to clean floor areas. Hoses used to wash the floor of work areas should be fitted with trigger guns to save water.

## Can builders, subcontractors and developers be fined for polluting stormwater?

Yes. Developers and subcontractors must ensure all reasonable and practicable measures are taken to avoid the discharge or deposit of waste into any waters, or onto land where it might enter water.

Building and construction projects must comply with the EPA's *Stormwater Pollution Prevention Code of Practice for the Building and Construction Industry*. Practical advice can also be found in the *Handbook for Pollution Avoidance on Building Sites*.

## What are pollutants?

Pollutants are materials which can cause problems if they end up in a water body; a *full* list is found in Schedule 4 of the Water Quality Policy. The list includes:

- agricultural chemicals
- animal faeces
- building & construction waste
- carpet & upholstery cleaning waste
- green waste
- pesticides
- pool chemicals
- sawdust
- soil, clay, gravel & sand
- waste from grease traps
- airconditioning & cooling system wastewater
- brick, bitumen & concrete cutting wastewater
- building washwater
- fertilisers
- paint and paint scrapings
- pool backwash water
- rubbish
- sewage
- washdown water from vehicles

## How is the stormwater drainage system different from the sewerage system?

The stormwater system removes the water from all outside drains, including roof drains but excluding external sewer connections.

The sewerage system (or septic tank) services the kitchen, laundry, toilet and bathroom drains. This system treats the water before it is disposed of at sea or used for irrigation.

Stormwater is NOT treated before it enters the local creek, lake or beach and therefore only clean rainfall run-off should enter this system.

## Further information

### Legislation

Legislation may be viewed on the Internet at: [www.parliament.sa.gov.au/dbsearch/legsearch.htm](http://www.parliament.sa.gov.au/dbsearch/legsearch.htm)

Copies of legislation are available for purchase from:

Government Information Centre

Telephone:

13 23 24

Internet:

[www.info.sa.gov.au](http://www.info.sa.gov.au)

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