

Water Savers: water quality

Catchments with lots of bush and good tree cover usually have creeks with clear, good quality water. When we clear the trees and build towns or make farms the water quality may get worse if we are not very careful.

In the past towns used rivers as drains. Towns emptied their sewage effluent and stormwater drains into local rivers. Most waste water from homes including that from the toilet, shower and kitchen sink goes into the towns sewerage treatment works.

Stormwater drains collect water from street gutters and house roofs. This water may have rubbish, fertiliser washed off lawns, oil from roads and other pollutants in it.

Bare soil from farmland may erode and be washed into rivers. This soil may carry

1. Which catchments normally have creeks with clear, good quality water?

2. Where did many towns dispose of their sewage effluent and stormwater?

3. What types of household water go into sewage effluent?

4. Where does stormwater runoff come from?

fertilisers and other pollutants such as herbicides with it.

Many towns and cities pump much of their drinking water from rivers. Adelaide takes much of its drinking water from the Murray River which has many pollutants in it from towns in the upper catchment such as Wagga Wagga and Canberra.

We are now investigating ways to stop polluting rivers. Sewage treatment plants are now disposing of their effluent on land instead of into rivers. Sewage effluent is being used in Wagga Wagga to water parks, gardens and playing fields. It is also being used to irrigate tree crops. People are also using detergents in the kitchen and laundry which have less phosphorus. Phosphorus is a big problem in rivers because it helps blue-green algae grow.

5. Why does Wagga Wagga have to be very careful with what it puts into the river?

6. What can we do with sewage effluent instead of disposing of it in the river?

7. What can you do to reduce stormwater pollution?
