

## **Water Quality: Urban Stormwater**

Stormwater is pure rainwater plus anything the rain carries along with it. In urban areas, rain that falls on the roof of your house, or collects on paved areas like driveways, roads and footpaths is carried away through a system of pipes that is separate from the sewerage system. Unlike sewage, stormwater is not treated. In some cases it's filtered through traps, usually located at the end of the pipe system, but it still flows directly from streets and gutters into our rivers, the harbor and the ocean. Straight from your street to waterways inhabited by fish, frogs and other aquatic animals and plants.

If you live near a waterway or often spend time in or near the water you are probably familiar with what happens after rain. Polluted stormwater spreading out into the surrounding clean water can be clearly seen because it's a muddy color, and often carries litter with it. You may be advised not to swim for a couple of days, because the pollution carried along with the rainwater may pose a significant health risk.

Stormwater pollution can be controlled if everyone plays a part in managing the drains in the streets where they live and work. In other words, if you look after your local drains, you can dramatically improve what happens in the harbors, on the beaches and in the rivers. The most effective way to reduce stormwater pollution is to stop it entering the system in the first place.