



## THE WATER CYCLE

### The Water Cycle

The water cycle is a continuous circulation of water between the earth and the atmosphere, powered by the sun and gravity. Water from vegetation, soils and the oceans rises as water vapour to the atmosphere and condenses. Gravity brings rainfall to the earth where it filters through to groundwater or flows via waterways to the bay. Human uses of water include storage in dams, irrigation, domestic and industrial use.

### Where does the water in my house come from and where does it go?

You can't really see how water is delivered into your home. Most of us just turn on the tap and never think about pipes running into and out of our houses, offices or schools. Water flows through the catchment into creeks and rivers and is contained in lakes by major holding dams. These dams control the release of water downstream. Water is then piped from the dam to a treatment station where impurities are allowed to settle and chemical treatment is carried out to improve the quality of the water. It then travels through a system water supply pipes that connect to your house.

### What is wastewater?

Wastewater is the water that goes down the drains inside your home. Water from the toilet, the bath and shower, the sink, the dishwasher and the laundry is called wastewater.

Wastewater is treated before it goes back into the system. It is piped and pumped to a treatment plant where some of the impurities are removed and the quality of the water is improved before it is pumped back into the creeks or rivers and flows into the bay.

Australia is the driest continent in the world and we suffer from very uncertain levels of rainfall. It is essential that everyone is careful with the amount of water they use. Habits like turning off the tap when cleaning your teeth, keeping showers to a minimum and washing cars with a bucket can make a difference. Wastewater is water we can use again rather than take more fresh supplies from the environment. Treated wastewater is a valuable resource and can be reused for irrigation, agriculture and horticulture, tree plantations and for use in cooling towers.

### What is stormwater?

Stormwater is rainwater that falls on your roof, driveway, lawn or the road. This water ends up in the stormwater drain system and can pick up pollutants from hard and soft surfaces. There are thousands of kilometres of stormwater drains all over South East Queensland. It is a different system to that used to pipe and treat wastewater. The water in the stormwater system is not treated at any stage.

It is important that everyone understands the difference between stormwater and wastewater. Wastewater is treated. Stormwater is not treated. Wastewater can be used again. Stormwater pollution impacts on the health of waterways. Make sure you put all your rubbish into the correct bins and never dump anything into the stormwater drains because it flows directly to the creek or river and ends up in the bay.



Stormwater drains discharge sediments, nutrients and litter from urban areas.



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For further information about the SEQ Healthy Waterways Partnership telephone (07) 3402 4206 or visit: [www.healthywaterways.org](http://www.healthywaterways.org)