Protecting Our Waterways and Bays

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Each of us can play our part to protect our local waterways, to ensure our bays and creeks and the plants and animals within them stay healthy.

Here are 10 things we can do.

Image: Melbourne Water

1. Dispose of litter responsibly
Cigarette butts, bottle tops, plastic bags and fishing lines and hooks can be mistaken for food or can choke and kill animals. Place litter in the bin and pick it up where you can. Take 3 for the sea!

2. Pick up after your pets
Animal waste can enter storm drains after rain, spreading bacteria and making our beaches unsafe to swim in. Their poo may contain nutrients that accelerate weed growth and also carry diseases that can be passed on to humans and native animals.

3. Don't put anything except water down storm drains
Motor oil, detergents, fertilizers, pesticides and other contaminants get carried by stormwater to local waterways and cause unnecessary harm. Go here for more information.

This fact sheet was developed in conjunction with Melbourne Water

4. Avoid using pesticides or chemical fertilizers
Pesticides and synthetic fertilisers can pose a serious threat to your health and pollute both ground and surface water. Nutrients from fertiliser can cause algal blooms in waterways, which can result in fish kills. Try natural pest reduction instead.

5. Choose non-toxic household products whenever possible
We can stop pollutants from entering our waterways by using non-toxic products. For example, many antibacterial soaps and cleaning products contain trichlosan, a pesticide that can harm aquatic life. Regular soap and water kill germs just as effectively. Check out products that are not dangerous to the environment here.

6. Use sea-safe sunscreen at the beach
Australians are beach-lovers, but did you know that we leave behind an estimated 14,000 tons of sunscreen in our marine environment annually? Some sunscreens contain chemicals that harm marine life. Find out more at Reef Check

7. Manage garden waste
Did you know that leaves contain 50-80% of the nutrients a plant extracts from soil and air during its growing season? To keep our waterways healthy, stop leaves and other organic matter from washing down our stormwater drains by placing them in your compost or green waste bin.

8. Revegetate creek banks
Vegetation protects creek banks, reducing erosion and preventing litter entering our waterways, as well as providing habitat for animals. If your land fronts a creek, check out Melbourne Water's Stream Frontage Management Program. If you'd like to volunteer to restore local public land, you might like to join your local Friends group.

9. Always taking all fishing line home to prevent entanglement
Responsibly dispose of your fishing line, to ensure animals such as dolphins do not become entangled. You can check out the Dolphin Research Institute for more about how to protect our marine wildlife.

10. Join a Beach Patrol
You may have noticed people in coordinated t-shirts cleaning up our beaches? They're part of Beach Patrol – volunteers who meet up monthly to collect litter. Join a group near you!

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