

It all goes somewhere!



Many daily activities have the potential to upset the delicate ecological balance of our waterways.



Whether you live in a major city, small town or in the country, what you do at home, work and school in the Great Barrier Reef catchment can affect the quality of water in the Reef.

Many of your daily activities may increase the levels of nutrients, sediments and chemicals being discharged to the Great Barrier Reef.
FROM THE CITY TO THE SEA

Nutrients, sediments and other pollutants can reach our Great Barrier Reef through a number of sources. One of the main sources is through stormwater and wastewater that is discharged from our towns and cities.

Everything we pour down the sink, drop on our streets and put in our drains has the potential to reach our waterways and the Great Barrier Reef.

Wastewater is the water that goes down the sinks and drains inside your home. Water from the toilet, the bath, the shower, the sink, the dishwasher and the laundry is known as wastewater. Wastewater from your home is treated at a treatment station before it is discharged to creeks or rivers or reused over land. At the treatment station, some (but not all) of the impurities are removed from the water so the health of the water is improved.

Stormwater is rainwater that ends up in a stormwater drain system after it has fallen on your roof, driveway, lawn or on the road.

The water in the stormwater drain system is not treated, therefore any chemicals or rubbish left in a stormwater drain can flow into a creek or river, especially during heavy rainfall.

Wastewater and stormwater is often discharged through drains into creeks and rivers, which often flow directly into the Great Barrier Reef.

The water quality in an estuary, river, stream or creek may impact on the quality of water in the Great Barrier Reef.

FROM THE LAND TO THE REEF

Today, 80 per cent of the land adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park supports agriculture production such as beef cattle

grazing and cropping.

To make space for these agricultural activities, large areas of native vegetation have been cleared. This, along with over-stocking on farms, has caused widespread soil erosion in some parts of the Great Barrier Reef Catchment.

This has led to the increased discharge of eroded material such as nutrients and sediments to the Great Barrier Reef.

The discharge of these pollutants occurs mainly during times of heavy rainfall.

In areas where cropping occurs, the application of fertilisers and pesticides may be necessary. Fertilisers are taken up by the crop to help them grow, while pesticides help maintain crop health by minimising the impact of pests. However, a significant portion may also end up in nearby waterways and coastal waters, particularly if there is a creek or river close by.

ON THE WATER

Many activities take place in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park including boating, fishing, diving, snorkelling and shipping. Every time we enter the waters of the Great Barrier Reef, we have the potential to impact on it. Some of the activities that take place on the water may contribute to the declining water quality of the Great Barrier Reef.

For example, sewage discharged from vessels into the Reef's waters can contain large amounts of nutrients and sediments and litter thrown overboard can harm or even kill marine animals. Shipping can also impact on water quality especially during an oil or chemical spill from a ship.

Shipping spills and groundings have the potential to cause serious environmental damage to the marine environment. However, waste products and garbage from the day-to-day operation of a ship can also pollute the waters of the Great Barrier Reef.

These wastes may include oils, chemicals, sewage, garbage, and toxic compounds released from anti-fouling paints and ballast water.

When in the water, try not to stir up sediment or disturb coral.

Sweep your driveway and patio areas instead of hosing to prevent water from carrying pollutants to stormwater drains.

When snorkelling or diving, do not rest or stand on coral and avoid touching anything with your fins.

When visiting islands, do not use detergents close to any waterways including the ocean.

Travel slowly in your boat near islands and the mainland to minimise bank erosion and sediment disturbance from boat wash.

Compost and use garden beds or vegetation strips around your home to capture rainwater and minimise runoff.

Use less water by fixing leaking taps, keeping showers to a minimum and washing your car with a bucket.