



Water Pollution Management of the Darebin Creek

Stormwater from across the catchment flows into the Darebin Creek, the Yarra River and into Port Phillip Bay carrying with it pollutants from various land uses. Whether its industrial, residential or agricultural, water pollution threatens the ability for the Darebin Creek to support healthy communities of people, flora and fauna. Water pollution needs to be managed on a catchment level and involves many stakeholders and strategies. The Darebin Creek Management Committee (DCMC) has a number of projects to address water pollution in the catchment, some of which are listed in this fact sheet.

Where Does Water Pollution Come From?

Pollutants enter a river system from a range of land uses across its catchment. Poor water quality is the result of the combined effects of a variety of activities in the catchment. Some pollution comes from direct sources, which can be easily identified, for example a factory or business discharging its wastes into a drain. These are called point sources.

Discolouration in a Darebin Creek stormwater outlet



is an example of point source pollution.

However, many of the pollutants that enter our waterways come from a wide area, for example fertilisers used throughout a farming area, or on parks and gardens. These non-point (diffuse) sources are harder to manage.

When people drop litter such as plastic and cans on the street, they are washed into the creek through stormwater drains when it rains. Floating plastic and other solids are harmful as they may suffocate birds, animals and fish, and reduce the amount of light and oxygen available to aquatic life. Plastic is not biodegradable and persists for a long time in the environment. Ingestion of plastics by animals is increasingly becoming a problem.

Projects

The DCMC together with the Friends of Darebin Creek, Darebin Parklands Association, Environment Protection Authority (EPA), Melbourne Water and local government are working to reduce water pollution in the Darebin Creek.

Drain Labelling Project

The focus of this project is to improve the reporting time of pollution spills in the Darebin Creek as well as improving the reporting system for the general public and the EPA. A series of signs have been installed along the Creek between Lower Heidelberg Road Alphington and McKimmies Road, Bundoora at entry points to stormwater drains. If people notice discoloured liquid, foam or other pollutants flowing into the creek, they can call the EPA and report their observation quoting the location number printed on the sign (see below).



Gutter Guards

The DCMC has installed over 60 Gutter Guards in Banyule and Darebin City Councils in the vicinity of Preston and Heidelberg. The gutter guards are a series of stainless steel bars that are fitted in front of a drain to prevent litter entering the stormwater system from the road. Council street sweeping trucks then collect this litter. Gutter guards prevent larger litter items from entering the street drains and ultimately the Darebin Creek.

Shopping Trolleys

The DCMC has been working with local government, retailers, shopping centre managers, Melbourne Water, schools and shoppers to reduce the number of shopping trolleys from entering the creek. Shopping trolleys clog the waterway and collect debris particularly plastic bags and other litter.

Every year a Shopping Trolley Muster is organised to raise awareness of the issue and to physically remove the trolleys from the creek. Up to 100 trolleys have been removed from the Darebin Creek at these events.



Shopping trolleys clog the Darebin Creek

Education

Education is the key to long-term, sustainable water quality improvements. Stormwater education in schools along with community water monitoring programs such as Waterwatch play an important role in educating the community about water pollution. The DCMC runs a number of events to raise awareness of the Darebin Creek and water quality issues through community frog nights and walks and talks of the Darebin Creek and planting days.

Dog Poo-llution at the Darebin Parklands

In 2002 a public education program was introduced along with infrastructure to reduce the amount of dog poo being littered in the Darebin Parklands. Dog Poo bins and bags are available throughout the Darebin Parklands and approximately 40 kilograms of poo is collected every week, keeping the park clean and reducing the amount of dog faeces from entering the Darebin Creek.

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