



Clean Waters Policy

Sutherland Shire Council

Document review and approval

This document has been approved by

	Name	Minute No	Date approved
1	<i>Environment & Health Committee – EHC377-95</i>	975	20 March, 1995
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3			
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Revision history

Version	Author	Date	Revision
1	<i>Principal Environmental Scientist</i>	<i>20 March, 1995</i>	<i>Original Version</i>
2	<i>Manager Environmental Science</i>	<i>30 April, 2012</i>	<i>Policy reviewed under annual review process and policy is still current. Policy will be updated in the near future</i>

Clean Waters Policy

Introduction

Water is vital for human survival. It is utilised by people for agriculture, industry and recreation, and by the diverse ecosystems on which we depend. Water of adequate quantity and quality is central to the existence of life everywhere.

Water which is polluted or in limited supply however, has the potential to cause environmental degradation and may become a factor affecting ecosystem health and growth. For humans pollution may have adverse effects on drinking water supply, on the use of water for the production of food and by other industries, on the environment and on activities such as fishing, recreation and tourism.

The Shire is well known for its large areas of beautiful waterways. Many residents and visitors take advantage of these for recreational and lifestyle purposes. The Shire's waterways also support a productive oyster farming industry and are significant breeding and feeding grounds for fish and water birds, eg Towra Point Aquatic Reserve.

There is an increasing awareness of, and concern about the condition of the Shire's waterways. Intensification of urban land use, including domestic dwellings, roads, industrial and commercial areas, and degradation in the performance of existing services such as sewage and drainage, leads to increased run-off of pollutants. Loss of native bushland and the direct and indirect removal of wetlands, depleting natural buffer zones, allows the passage of pollutants into our waterways.

Clean Water and the Community

One of the major goals of water quality management is to improve community welfare through sustainable use and protection of the water resource. Quality of water has many impacts on the welfare of the community, and they therefore have an important interest in water quality.

However, the community's use of water can affect water quality. The way the community uses domestic water supplies, disposes of wastes, and manages their gardens all have impacts on water quality.

Industry also has a role to play in water quality management. Water usage by industry and disposal of wastes and waste water all have an impact on water quality.

Transport also contributes pollutants through fallout of atmospheric pollutants and runoff of hydrocarbons, rubber, and heavy metals from roads.

Ecologically Sustainable Development and Water Management

The concept of ecologically sustainable development has been adopted by all levels of government as the guiding philosophy for the management of natural resources. These principles must therefore form the basis of water quality management.

The National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development was published in December 1992. The core objectives of this strategy were:

- to enhance individual and community well-being and welfare by following a path of economic development that safeguards the welfare of future generations
- to provide for equity within and between generations
- to protect biological diversity and maintain essential ecological processes and life-support systems.

The Guiding Principles are:

- decision making processes should effectively integrate both long and short-term economic, environmental, social and equity considerations
- where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation
- the global dimension of environmental impacts of actions and policies should be recognised and considered
- the need to develop a strong, growing and diversified economy which can enhance the capacity for environmental protection should be recognised
- the need to enhance and maintain international competitiveness in an environmentally sound manner should be recognised
- cost effective and flexible policy instruments should be adopted, such as improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms
- decisions and actions should provide for broad community involvement on issues that affect them.

These guidelines form the core on which all policy and decisions in relation to management of water should be based if the principles of ecological sustainability are to be adhered to. These guidelines are designed to accommodate economic and social growth, without having a detrimental effect on the environment.

Clean Waters Management Plan

To achieve the objectives of the Clean Waters Policy the Clean Waters Management Plan was compiled. This Management Plan contains a list of prioritised actions and strategies, in line with the processes referred to above, that have been based upon research into water quality problems and environmental risks.

It outlines the actions and strategies that Council's Environment and Health Committee will adopt and integrate into divisional work programs over the next five years. It is recognised that this Management Plan will not be a static plan and actions and priorities will change as further research, which is needed, is completed.

The Management Plan prioritises actions and strategies as being either immediate, short term or long term. These priorities have been based upon the risk to public health, the environment and quality of life, in accordance with the processes recommended in the policy.

The Management Plan identifies several areas where urgent action is required. These being: control of the quality and quantity of urban runoff; further incorporation of water protection requirements in development and building controls; and mapping and water monitoring of sensitive bays, creeks, wetlands and groundwater.

Adoption of the Clean Waters Management Plan should lead to the effective and efficient management of Sutherland Shire's water resources and achieve the objectives of the Clean Waters Policy.

Structure of the Management Plan

The Management Plan has been divided into the key elements of water management, these being; Stormwater; Rivers/Estuaries/Streams; Ocean; Groundwater; and Research and Monitoring.

For each of these key elements, the major ways in which they impact on water quality have been identified as Issues. From these issues key objectives have been determined in accordance with the Clean Waters Policy. Prioritised strategies and actions have been formulated to achieve the key objectives.

Strategies have been prioritised as follows:

Immediate: Action or Strategy to be implemented immediately, ie within 12 months. This will involve actions and strategies that can be readily implemented without the need for extensive studies or detailed research. Benefits to the aquatic environment as a result of the Implementation of the action or strategy should be substantial and also immediately visible. Many of these actions are currently being implemented by Council.

Short Term: Action or Strategy to be implemented within the next two to three years. These may involve actions or strategies that require some previous study or research prior to being implemented. Resulting benefits to the aquatic environment will also not be immediately visible and may take two to three years before improvements can be seen.

Long Term: Action or strategy to be implemented over the next four years. These may include actions or strategies that involve extensive study or research prior to being implemented. Resulting benefits to the aquatic environment may take many years before improvement is noted.

Costing figures are provided for all actions and strategies. Some may be implemented with little or no cost to Council, with the only costs incurred being existing employee time. Other items incur a significant cost as they involve the purchase of equipment, infrastructure, analysis, or consultancy fees. These costings and the prioritised listing of actions may then be used to provide funding estimates for the implementation of the Management Plan over the next five years. These figures have been provided in the Table below.

Yearly Funding for Implementation of Clean Waters Management Plan			
1995/1996	1996/1997	1997/1998	1998/1999
\$87,000	\$88,500	\$32,000	\$20,000

*Excludes projects (value \$594,000) which have already been projected as part of the Four Year Stormwater Management Capital Works Program. Some 50% of these capital works have been funded by grants.

ISSUES	OBJECTIVES	PRIORITIES		
		IMMEDIATE	SHORT	LONG
			<p>9. Strengthen Council's clean-up capability and prepare a documented procedure for small to medium pollution incidents, both deliberate dumping and accidental spills. Co-ordinate Council, EPA, SBS, Fire Brigade and Water Board procedures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • purchase containment boom • organise storage tank • A local company has been identified which is a specialist in pollution clean-up and can be hired on an hourly rate for emergencies. • Presently we have SOKEROL (absorbent wood chips) and the Water Jet Truck which has only a 2 meter reach to deal with incidents, the Bushfire Brigade has a portable pump/s. Council has to hire portable pumps when needed. Cost: \$10,000 <p>10. Buy access to Water Board's Geographic Information System (IFIS) to identify Board's Sewer overflows and Pumping Station overflows (as well as watermains and sewers) Cost: \$30,000</p>	

ISSUES	OBJECTIVES	PRIORITIES		
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<p>RIVERS/ESTUARIES/STREAMS</p> <p>Sewer overflows and stormwater disposal, leading into the Shire Rivers/Estuaries and Streams, are quickly causing a deterioration of water quality throughout the Shire. Such deterioration mainly includes an increase in nutrient levels causing excessive weed growth, an increase in bacteriological levels causing health risk to bathers and an increase in siltation causing poor flushing of bays/streams and deterioration of blota.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.No adverse impact on Rivers/Streams/Estuaries through increases in flows or discharges of pollutants such as runoff and sewer overflows. 2.Protection of instream blota. 3.Preservation of natural water quality measures such as wetlands and mangroves. 4.Preservation of bathing quality in waterways. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Prepare an overall Catchment Management Planning Policy for the Shire, emphasising land-use-planning, which will encourage the sustainable management of rivers, streams and estuaries resources by addressing such things as: *types of sustainable developments accepted in each catchment area. *remedial action for the rehabilitation and restoration of degraded areas. *buffer zones. <p>Cost: \$30,000</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Council complete a full environmental audit of its commercial and industrial developments. Cost: Benefit: prevent range existing/future breaches of the relevant Acts i.e. E.O.P. Act E.P.A. Act C.W. Act 2. Implement an “adopt a Stream” programme as part of the Water Board Streamwatch programme. Target industrial catchments. Cost: staff to organise the programme. Benefit: public interaction in water protection. 3. Review the NSW State Rivers and Estuaries Policy and the suite of component policies. Translate and incorporate these policies into practical management strategies. Benefit: will assist in the compiling of the Council’s proposed codes/policies. 4. Council lobby/request the Water Board extend its Clean Water Programms pilot studies beyond that of the Port Hacking River Study. Benefit: obtain valuable background information which will assist in the formulating of above codes/policies. 	

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		IMMEDIATE	SHORT	LONG
<p>GROUNWATER</p> <p>Tree Loss Negative impacts on groundwater from human activities mostly include increased salination or chemical pollution. Salination occurs when groundwater tables rise to the surface due to removal of tree coverage.</p> <p>Industrial Pollution The most immediate threat to groundwater in the Shire appears to be from large point source industries, composite effects of smaller light industries, and from waste dump sites.</p> <p>Over Pumping The other threat to groundwater quality is over pumping which when it occurs, above volumes unable to be recharged by rainwater, can lead to increased salination of groundwater.</p> <p>Development Changes to groundwater levels and flows through groundwater interception, redirection etc from major developments, eg bate bay Project.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Groundwater protected as a resource for future use. 2. Prevention of contamination of groundwater supplies. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Specify large scale retention of trees in land release areas and open-space design. 2. Educational activities for industry and the public. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Audit industries with respect to groundwater contamination. The EPA is responsible for licensed establishments; Council should take more responsibility for small industries. 2. Analyse irrigation uses of groundwater recreational areas. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compile a groundwater database for the Shire. 2. Formulate policy on land use planning in sensitive groundwater areas.

ISSUES	OBJECTIVES	PRIORITIES		
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		<p>3. Compiling a data base, on the existing quality of water, through short-term studies of oceans, rivers, streams and estuaries.</p> <p>Cost: \$20,000</p> <p>4. Purchase automatic sampler and prepare pollution profile of each creek and drain in turn, say, 6-12 months at each location.</p> <p>Cost: 5 x \$10,000 (purchase only). 3 x 1995, 2 x 1996</p> <p>5. Identify Shire wetland sites for preservation and include on GIS. Cost: Student study, no cost.</p>		

