

Make a Difference

what you can do ...

info sheet 14



Ngaragall the creator.

As you leave this Water Walk and go back to walk your daily life, remember that you can have a positive influence on catchment health and water quality.

PROTECT

Prevent harmful things from flowing into creeks, rivers, stormwater drains and down the plug-hole! Be very aware of the substances water is carrying away from your home, school and workplace. (Remember that they will flow into a creek, river, lake or the ocean somewhere, even if it's not into a drinking water catchment.)

- use less fertilizers and pesticides on your garden or on your farm
- keep a buffer of vegetation next to creeks and waterways
- use cleaning products with low (or no) phosphorous
- wash your car on the lawn
- wrap used cooking oils & put them in the garbage
- never pour leftover paints or solvents down the sink or drain (let them evaporate and put containers in the garbage)
- take used motor oil to a service station that recycles it
- and remember, everything that goes down the toilet must have gone into your mouth first (except the toilet paper)!



CONSERVE

Use less water in everything you do.

- install water efficient appliances (shower roses, washing machines, dual-flush toilet)
- take shorter showers, and don't run the tap while you brush your teeth!
- flush the toilet less, and use the dual flush
- fix leaky taps
- use buckets where you'd usually use a hose
- plant native plants in your garden, use mulch and compost
- and monitor how much water you use (use your water meter).



(For more ideas, see *Info Sheet 11: Water Conservation*, and get hold of '**Your Guide to Saving Water in your Home and Garden**' from Rous Water).

Help restore natural ecosystems so that they can help the natural process of water filtration and catchment management ...



GET INVOLVED

Help restore natural ecosystems so that they can help the natural process of water filtration and catchment management. Work together with other people in your community to do this.

- Learn as much as you can about water, and your local catchments. Find out what activities occur that negatively affect water quality.
- Attend meetings about developments that could affect the health of catchments and water quality. Ask questions.
- Get involved in Landcare programs and other community activities to repair erosion of the banks of creeks and rivers.
- Support the protection of wetlands which act as natural filters
- Support water quality monitoring projects run by local schools, universities and community groups
- Call the Pollution Line on 131 555 (24 hours a day) to report pollution in creeks and other waterways

If we all do these things, we will make a huge difference to the health of the catchments where you live, work and play, and the quality of water that flows from them.

Water is a major part of us, and we are part of the water cycle.

THE EFFECTS OF YOUR ACTIONS

Some people think that it's not worth doing anything for the environment, because "just one person can't make a difference". Well, every action you take makes a difference.

As Fran Peavey, an activist who has been involved in bringing great changes including ambitious water projects, said:

"Just by living our lives, consuming space and resources, we are making a difference. Our choice is what kind of a difference to make."

By protecting and conserving water and restoring ecosystems you will help:

- **Create Healthy Aquatic Ecosystems.**
The health of dams, rivers, creeks, wetlands, estuaries and the ocean will improve. All the animals and plants that live in these places will also be better off
- **Improve Your Drinking Water.**
Healthy catchments and dams produce better quality water. The healthier they are, the healthier you'll be!
- **Save Money.**
The less water has to be treated, the less money it costs you and your family in water and sewerage rates.
- **Create a Model for Sustainability**
(meeting environmental, social, and economic needs). The catchment will have healthy ecosystems, be economically viable and produce a high quality water supply.

And just remember, we ARE mostly water. Water is a major part of us, and we are part of the water cycle. So, in a way, we are water working for ourselves.



BURBANG. THE ANIMALS ARE COMING TOGETHER.

Conversation between Sheldon Harrington Snr., Widjabul descendant and artist; Anthony Acret, Catchment Manager of Rous Water; and Eshana, author of the info sheet series, about Sheldon's painting 'Burbang'.

Sheldon: It's about the animals in the water. It's nice healthy and fresh water. You got the platypus, you got the fish, you got the catfish, you got the turtle, you got a bird laying down in the corner of the right hand side. The water is very clear and fresh, and the animals they all live together and they **share** it. Now the black dots represents the rocks in the river. It just tells you about the water and the animals in it.

The brown and green are the trees and the earth. They are the land that juts out from the land, the points of the land that come out.

You got the catfish in the bottom left. It's an eel tail catfish. He has a big fan tail.

The turtles are floating.

The fish represents all the perch, the bass, the cod, **all** the native fish.

The bird is a plover. He's nesting there. You can see the reeds around him.

Djanbung the platypus is in the middle. He's a bit bigger because he's the main person of the area, so we like to bring him out a bit. Some say his tail's too big, but it's just to **represent** the animals.

When you are doing Aboriginal art, the Aboriginal art is not a perfect drawing. You don't do perfect anything. It doesn't look the same. Each artist has got a different idea of what that animal is, what colours to put into him. That's why I say to school kids "If you close your eyes, and you think about the animal, and how you're going to draw it, as long as you yourself can understand what that animal is, then the other people will understand. You get close to it, and you know what they are then."

That's just my way of drawing. I just like to represent the animals and that's just how I draw.

The pattern is just my border pattern. I've been doing it for years.

'Look after the water. The water looks after us.'

*Garima gala nyabay. Gala nyabay
garima ngali ngih.*



You got your own design. And that design sticks with you forever. And then as you go, it gets better and better and you'll add to it. That's your design then. And you can pass it down. ... Over the years, you got to adopt your own artwork, but you got to keep it within that boundary. But everyone's got different ideas about Aboriginal art, but I like to keep it to the basics.

Anthony: So there's no human interaction in there? Just a healthy functioning ecosystem?

Sheldon: *There's no humans in the painting. It's just the fresh friendly water. The water's all fresh. It's nice and clean. There's nothing coming into the water. The animals are healthy. And it's back in them times too, you know. Because if you look at the water now, there could be chemicals floating on top, or something's going through the water. Some of these animals are dying out.*

Eshana: And so, as well as this being in the past, this is what we're looking for in the future?

Sheldon: *Yeah, nice fresh water.*



You can get your own copy of Rous Water's 'Your Guide to Saving Water in your Home and Garden' by phoning 6621 8055; writing to us at PO Box 230, Lismore NSW 2480 or water@rouswater.nsw.gov.au; or visiting our educational showroom at 218-232 Molesworth Street, Lismore.



(Sources: Rous Water's 'Your Guide to Saving Water in your Home and Garden'; WaterWise brochure 'Water: Its Future is in our Hands' produced by Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Queensland Local Governments; Department of Land & Water Conservation (2002) brochure 'Everyday Things to Keep our Waterways Healthy')



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These information sheets were prepared for Rous Water by Sustainable Futures Australia in liaison with Widjabul elders. © Rous Water & Sustainable Futures Australia, 2004. This is an educational project for the protection of water and land, and for reconciliation.

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