POLICY MANUAL

Policy title:	**WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY POLICY**
Policy number:	**5.17.2**
Objective:	**To maintain and enhance water quality and quantity in the Richmond River and its tributaries.**
Link to community vision/service:	**Water & Waste Cycle, Natural Environment**
Program Area:	**Environmental Health**
Policy created: **12/06/07**	**Council reviewed:** **12/06/07**
Last reviewed by staff: **12/06/07**	**TRIM Ref:** **ED10/15913 & ED16/33372**

This overarching policy applies to all sections within Council having an impact on water quality and stream flows, and contains 3 objectives.

1. To protect, restore and actively manage the riparian zone

Riverbanks provide an important buffer between a river's aquatic environments and the floodplain and drier lands of the catchment slopes, ridges and plateaux. Poor riparian condition and high sediment and nutrient loads in the Richmond River Catchment are well documented and the Stressed Rivers Assessment found 13 of 18 classified sub-catchments within the Richmond had a 'high environmental stress' rating (DLWC, 1999). The proportion of 'rainfall as run-off' is also high in this region, increasing the risk of stream channel erosion.

In the urban zone Council can influence riparian management by considering conservation values in Development Assessments and managing Crown and Council-owned land. Council has less influence in rural areas but can form partnerships with relevant stakeholders, and seek external funding for on-ground works.

Strategies for implementation

a) Protect and restore the riparian zone during new development activities through the use of planning controls;
b) Implement best management practices during the maintenance of Crown and Council-owned lands in riparian areas;
c) Restore Council-owned riparian lands by implementing existing Vegetation Management Plans;
d) Identify high priority riparian zones and restore them through partnerships with community groups, residents and commercial businesses;
e) Engage landholders in actively managing the riparian zone with a focus on the Wilsons River in the urban area;
f) Encourage improved environmental practices in rural areas through partnerships with landowners, agencies, NRCMA and industry and community groups.

2. To improve stormwater quality

In this context stormwater is defined as concentrated run-off from constructed drainage structures within the urban area. Water quality monitoring in the urban zone indicates that stormwater contributes very high loads of nutrients and pollutants to our waterways. In 1999 Council adopted a Stormwater Management Plan to improve urban stormwater quality. Implementation of this plan has been limited by financial constraints. This policy has been developed to commit to the implementation of Council's Stormwater Management Plan, and other initiatives such as the adoption of Water Sensitive Urban Design principles and Integrated Water Cycle Management to conserve and manage water.

Strategies for implementation

a) Maintain and improve the quality of urban stormwater through implementation of actions within Council's existing Stormwater Management Plan;
b) Develop and implement a Development Control Plan (DCP) for Water Sensitive Urban Design;
c) Implement Council's Integrated Water Cycle Management Plan (stormwater provisions);
d) Provide an appropriate allocation of funds from the 'Water and Sewer dividend' to implement these strategies.

3. To improve practices in rural areas

There are numerous practices undertaken in rural areas that may result in the pollution or misuse of water, including excessive soil cultivation, ground-cover removal and waste discharge. Council's role in influencing rural practices is usually regulatory, typically triggered by complaints regarding specific pollution incidents. Development Applications are not required for most agricultural activities, except for intensive agriculture, such as dairies and piggeries. Due to Councils limited role there is reliance on State agencies to influence rural practices. Council is responsible, however, for managing gravel roads, which increase sedimentation of waterways.

Strategies for implementation

a) Improve rural land management practices affecting water quality and quantity through partnerships with relevant stakeholders, e.g. landholders, industry groups and agencies.
b) Reduce the movement of sediment from gravel roads into waterways through best practice in road construction and design and strategic installation of water diversion banks and sediment traps plus road sealing where practical and achievable.
c) Ensure that the provisions within Councils on-site sewage management strategy are implemented and regularly reviewed to conform with best management practice

4. To reduce per capita demand for potable water

Reducing the demand for potable (i.e. drinking quality) water has a wide range of environmental, financial and social benefits. These include a reduction in the amount of high quality water that needs to be extracted from our streams and stored, which puts pressure on natural river flows. It can also reduce the amount of wastewater to be treated and encourages 'fit for purpose' water use within the community.

Strategies for implementation

a) Council encourage and show leadership in planting low water use and locally appropriate species
b) Reduce household water usage through partnerships with Rous Water, other Councils and independent initiatives
c) Council reduce water use during its own operations and within Council buildings
d) Implement Council's Integrated Water Cycle Management Plan (water supply provisions)
e) Actively encourage adoption of practices that lead to 'fit for purpose' water use, through planning provisions.