



# WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PREVENT GROUNDWATER POLLUTION

Groundwater is a precious resource which supplies 90% of the Territory's water supplies. Some 30,000 bores have been drilled for pastoral/stock bores (40%), rural domestic (20%), water resource investigation (20%), town & community supplies (10%), mining (5%) and construction/ roads/ irrigation (5%).

While it is possible to utilise surface water (Katherine River, Manton and Darwin River Dams) in the humid zone, most communities in the Territory rely solely on groundwater for their water supply. For example, Alice Springs (Roe Creek Borefield) and Tennant Creek (Kelly Well Basin).

Because of this reason, groundwater needs to be managed and protected. The disadvantage of groundwater is that once polluted, it is very difficult to treat. While the department legislates under the *Water Act* to protect and sustain it for long term, every person can do something to prevent pollution.

## CHEMICALS

In the rural area, fertilisers, fungicides, insecticides and herbicides are used regularly. These chemicals and other toxic compounds can dissolve, percolate and pollute groundwater.

To reduce the possibility of this happening, you can:

- apply chemicals according to manufacturers instructions;
- consider seriously, the amount of chemicals/ fertilisers/ pesticides that you use on your property and if they are necessary;
- regularly check your chemical storage area and septic system for any leaks;
- avoid ground contact when mixing, storing and using chemicals. For instance store them on a concrete area where spills can be contained & cleaned up;
- review your diesel storage area – is diesel seeping into the ground from the containers;
- check sprayer equipment to ensure proper calibration so that recommended application rates are not exceeded;
- put devices on all taps and hoses used to fill pesticide and herbicide sprayers to prevent back-siphoning;
- dispose of containers and unwanted chemicals at your local tip or through your council's recycling program.

## Pollution Response Line

24 Hour Hotline

**1800 064567** (Freecall)

### CONTACT DETAILS:

**Department of Natural Resources, Environment & the Arts**

#### Palmerston

4th Floor Goyder Building  
(PO Box 30) Palmerston NT  
0831 Ph: 89 993678 or  
89 993632 Fax: 89 993666

#### Katherine

Randazzo Arcade  
16 Katherine Terrace  
Katherine NT 0850  
Ph: 89 738100 Fax: 89 738122

#### Alice Springs

1st Floor Alice Plaza, Todd  
Street, (PO Box 1120)  
Alice Springs NT 0871  
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This pamphlet is one in a series on water resource topics in the Northern Territory.

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE:**

[www.nt.gov.au/nreta](http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta)



**Northern Territory Government**  
Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts

Updated: October 2006

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## HOUSEHOLD WASTE

The amount of waste produced by an average household would fill most of the rooms in a house in 12 months but the real concern is that 80% of this waste can be recycled.

The average office worker throws out more than their own weight in paper each year. Australians wear out about 17 million tyres each year. These end up in landfills or are burnt.

You can contribute to the preservation of groundwater quality by reducing the amount of waste disposed of in landfills by making use of recycling/disposal programs which are operated by your local tip or council. You can also contribute by :

- composting your food scraps;
- recycling jars, glass, aluminium cans, plastic bottles and milk containers;
- mulching garden cuttings;
- dispose of your engine oil at your local tip;
- recycling paper;

## SEWERAGE

A full septic tank or poorly operating drain field allows bacteria and toxic levels of nutrients to contaminate groundwater.

To prevent sewage entering groundwater, you can ensure that:

- household chemicals such as paints, thinners, solvents, photographic solutions, cleaning fluids, etc. are not disposed of through the septic system;
- groundwater bores are located outside the required 100 metre separation distance from septic systems. This will prevent the bore water from becoming polluted by any leakages from the septic.

## CORROSION

To overcome the problem of corrosion in bores you should:

- carry out regular checks on the condition of your bore;
- seal any bore that is no longer useable or which may be contaminating or wasting groundwater. Seek advice from our Water Management Branch and a licenced driller.

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For further information visit our website

[www.nt.gov.au/nreta](http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta)