



## Stormwater Pollution Management: Measuring Performance

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Setting clear goals, and finding indicators which meaningfully measure progress towards goals, is a demonstrated way of improving performance. However, developing meaningful measures, which may at first seem straightforward, can be incredibly difficult. The development of a stormwater pollution performance measure for Melbourne Water is no exception.

Melbourne Water undertakes many activities aimed at reducing the volume of surface runoff and pollutants entering waterways, waterbodies and bays. These activities include construction of stormwater quality treatment systems; maintenance and renewal of these systems; engaging with rural landholders to reduce pollutant runoff from farms; partnering with local Councils to build stormwater quality systems; and capacity building programs (e.g. with landholders, Councils and broader industry). There are also other activities which, whilst their primary aim may not be to reduce stormwater pollution, also have an impact. For example, works on waterways such as revegetation, stock exclusion fencing, re-snagging and bank stabilisation.

To develop a meaningful measure, we sought a metric which measured outcomes as opposed to outputs. Outcomes include waterway ecological health; bay and marine ecological health; and recreational and aesthetic values. Examples of output measures include number of treatment systems constructed, number of maintenance activities undertaken, number of grants provided. Outcomes are more meaningful measures than outputs because they measure the difference we make, rather than what is produced.

We found there is no measure or metric for stormwater pollution management that can meaningfully capture performance across all the activities we undertake, the landscapes we operate in and the outcomes we seek. As a pragmatic compromise, we adopted nitrogen and phosphorous reduction as performance measures for Port Phillip Bay and Western Port catchments respectively. They provide a reliable indication as to whether Melbourne Water's performance is improving or declining. Where they fall short is they do not measure outcomes. For future studies, it is recommended that separate measures be developed for landscapes and outcomes (e.g. waterway health outcomes in peri-urban areas, or recreational outcomes for beaches), rather than trying to combine across multiple outcomes and landscapes. We are now incorporating these considerations into Melbourne Water's refresh of the Healthy Waterways Strategy.