



The effects of paint pollution on our streams

Both water-based (acrylic) and enamel paints damage the health of stream life if washed down the stormwater drain.

Paint prevents light from entering the water, making it difficult for animals to find food and for plants to get energy.

Paint contains toxic chemicals which can directly poison aquatic life including fish and plants

Paint sludge can settle on the bottom of the stream and smother plants and animals

Toxic chemicals in paint can accumulate internally in plants and animals causing long-term effects and making them unsafe to eat.

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Never dispose of any type of paint or chemicals down stormwater drains.

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How to prevent paint pollution

Any paint from brushes, rollers and paint cans washed on a sealed surface, or washed into stormwater drains, grates or downpipes will flow directly to streams and Tasman Bay and cause damage to our environment. To prevent this happening you should:

- Use the two bucket system for acrylic paint, or the settling system for enamel paint and dispose of the paint residue in your rubbish bin.
- Recycle – don't send old paint or paint containers to landfill – take them back to your paint supplier for safe disposal

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Outside stormwater drains flow directly into our waterways and Tasman Bay, without treatment.

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Healthy Streams
From the Mountains to the Sea
ki uta ki tai



How to wash your paint brushes safely

Your responsibilities as a DIY painter



Find out how to wash your painting equipment safely to avoid pollution in our streams and coastal waters.

Washing your paint equipment into the stormwater drain is very damaging to our local environment.

How to safely wash painting equipment

Acrylic paint method

Use the 'two bucket system' shown opposite. Small amounts can be washed into the laundry sink or onto the lawn/garden.

Enamel paint method

Wash paint brushes in a bucket of solvent like turps, and leave the paint/turps mix overnight in a covered container – outdoors and away from any heat or electrical sources as solvents are highly flammable.

The paint solids will settle out overnight. You can then tip the liquid solvent back into a sealed container for re-use and dispose of the paint sludge in your rubbish bin.

Leftover paint

Small amounts of waste paint can be left to dry by removing the lid in an area away from children or animals. When the paint is completely dry, the paint solids can then be disposed of in your general rubbish.

Don't tip paint down stormwater drains (most outside drains) as this will cause pollution.

Don't tip paint down the household sink or toilet as this can cause serious problems within the wastewater network, and damage the treatment plant systems.

Any unwanted paint should be taken to your local paint supplier for recycling and you should re-use or recycle old paint containers.

Our streams and Tasman Bay are worth protecting. You can be fined for causing pollution and can incur all the costs of the clean up.



The two bucket system – for acrylic (water-based) paint



1 Use a large bucket to wash brushes, rollers and other equipment (away from waterways, drains and grates).



2 Transfer the washed equipment to a second bucket for a final rinse.



3 Place lids on the containers and allow to stand overnight.



4 In the morning, slowly pour the clear water from the first container onto the lawn or garden.



5 Stop just before you reach paint solids. The paint solids can be left to dry and then disposed of in your general rubbish.



6 The second container (containing the rinse water) now becomes the first container.

Other tips

If you are taking a short break from painting, wrap your brush or roller in a sealed plastic bag or cling film to keep it moist. You can leave brushes and rollers in a bucket of water overnight between painting days, and allow any paint solids to settle out as per the two bucket system.