



Clarence... a brighter place

Frequently Asked Questions

Howrah Beach Water Quality



IS HOWRAH BEACH CLOSED?

No, Howrah Beach is not closed, and the entire beach is open for walking. It is currently recommended not to swim in the middle section of the beach (map included on the following page). This area will be clearly signposted to make members of the public aware of the impacted area.

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN AND DOES COUNCIL KNOW

WHAT IS CAUSING THE CONTAMINATION?

The area behind Howrah Beach (the Howrah Beach catchment) has long been susceptible to stormwater contamination.

Clarence City Council does not yet know exactly where the contamination is coming from but will be employing additional staff to locate the sources. Stormwater systems in urban areas can readily become contaminated with sewage.

The source for such pollution can be caused by a failure in the wastewater (sewage) system, including overflows during high rainfall events, or direct cross-connections, leakages, or animal faeces in low rainfall (or non-rainfall) events.

WHAT EXACTLY HAS BEEN DETECTED IN THE WATER?

Clarence City Council samples for faecal bacteria indicators (called enterococci) in the water, i.e. searching for any indication that the water is contaminated with faecal matter.

Water contamination by sewage and animal faeces may contain pathogenic micro-organisms (bacteria, viruses, protozoa), which pose a health hazard when the water is used for primary contact recreation, such as swimming.

I WENT SWIMMING IN THE 'POOR' SECTION, WILL I BE OKAY?

It is unlikely that you will become sick. As always, if you are concerned, we would encourage you to talk to your GP or other healthcare professional.

IS IT SAFE FOR MY DOG TO SWIM IN MIDDLE HOWRAH BEACH?

This program only manages for human health. It is likely that it is safe for dogs to swim in Middle Howrah Beach, but if you are concerned both ends of the beach are graded as 'fair' and are safe for swimming.



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WHY IS THE CONTAMINATION ONLY AFFECTING MIDDLE HOWRAH BEACH?

It is likely that there is an undetected contamination source, or sources, somewhere in the mid-Howrah catchment. Clarence City Council is employing additional dedicated staff to investigate and locate those sources.

IS IT STILL OKAY TO SWIM AT THE EAST AND WEST SECTIONS IF THE MIDDLE SECTION IS CONTAMINATED?

Yes, you can still swim at either end of Howrah Beach. Always be aware of where and when you swim. Avoid swimming in the Derwent estuary for two days after heavy rain (> 10 mm of rain over a 24-hour period) and don't swim or allow children to play in or near stormwater outfalls (25m on either side of outfall) or urban rivulets.

WHAT IS COUNCIL DOING ABOUT THE CONTAMINATION?

Council officers have been investigating stormwater contamination in the Howrah Beach stormwater catchment area for several years. Council will appoint a full-time stormwater investigation officer to prioritise this investigation. Council is also working with the Derwent Estuary Program and TasWater to prioritise infrastructure upgrades and repairs to improve stormwater quality.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF REVIEWING THE BEACH GRADING?

Following every summer swimming season, the sample results are added to previous results, and the results from five years of sampling are collectively used to calculate a new long-term rating by the Derwent Estuary Program.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP PREVENT CONTAMINATION OF THE DERWENT ESTUARY?

Be aware that anything that you put into the stormwater network will wash out at the beach. Pick up after your dog at the beach and notify council of any illegal or suspicious polluting activities into the stormwater system.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

For more information about Howrah Beach's water quality and council's investigations into the source of the contamination, visit council's website at www.ccc.tas.gov.au.

