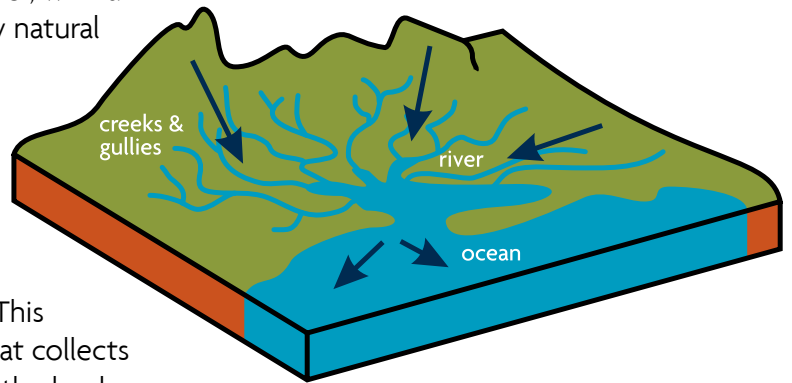


All About Catchments

WHAT IS A CATCHMENT?

A **catchment** is the area of land from which rainfall flows to a low point to form a creek or river. Catchments are found all over the world, big and small, dividing the Earth's surface into lots of bowls of water, with a waterway in the bottom of each bowl. Bordered by natural features like mountains and hills, water runs off the land into gullies, creeks, rivers, lakes and wetlands, eventually finding its way out to sea.

To explain how a catchment functions, think of what happens to the rain that falls on the roof of your house. The roof surface collects the rain, channels it to the gutters, and into the downpipe. This is essentially what a catchment is; an area of land that collects rainwater with water flowing to the lowest point in the landscape.



CATCHMENT LAND USES

If you look around Ipswich you will see a number of different ways in which the *land* is being *used*. This could be growing crops, grazing cattle, or building houses. Different types of land uses have different impacts on the environment, soil, water, plants and animals.

Managing the way we use land plays an important role in the health of our catchments. Land use within the Bremer River Catchment has been strongly influenced by early European's. Much of the fertile scrub country was cleared for timber production, farming practices and urban settlement. Many of the practices used by early settlers were not suited to the harsh, dry climate of Australia.

Today, many land uses have been adapted to minimise their impact on our natural environment and waterway health, such as: water sensitive design in new urban developments, appropriate rural land management practices, and reduced discharges from industries and sewerage treatment plants.



CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

With a growing population there is an increasing need for good agricultural land, space for people to live, natural resources such as timber, minerals and water that we use every day, natural areas for nature and ecosystem services. This pressure on natural resources within a catchment can result in a range of environmental problems including soil erosion, loss of native plants and animals, and water pollution. We all contribute to these problems, and we all need to play our part in keeping our catchments healthy.

Catchment Management is an important tool that helps us work together to manage land uses and resources within a catchment. It also sets out how governments, business, industry (such as mining), and the community can work together to manage natural resources in a balanced and sustainable way.

Everything within a catchment is linked together by the flow of water, so what happens in one part will affect other parts of the catchment. For example, if there is a soil erosion problem on a new housing development, this could lead to muddy creeks, loss of aquatic plants and animals, or flooding further downstream.

Some other catchment management issues include:

- erosion on grazing or cropping land
- blue-green algae in waterways
- sediment control on new roads
- waste and sewerage
- increasing salinity in cleared areas
- urban stormwater management

