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## *Media Statement*

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### **Three-year study findings prompt new phase of river testing**

The Swan River Trust today released findings from a three-year study into non-nutrient contaminants in the Swan Canning river system, undertaken by the Department of Water.

The Trust's summary paper draws together results from two separate technical reports, focusing on contaminants in drains and tributaries entering the river system, and in river sediment.

Swan River Trust principal scientist Kerry Trayler said the results, although typical of an urban area, were a pertinent reminder that stormwater drains across the entire catchment lead to the rivers.

"Even if people live a long way from the Swan and Canning rivers, everyone must take responsibility for river health and prevent chemicals, paint or oil from entering drains," Dr Trayler said.

"Results showed that compared with other rivers around the world, ours are in reasonable health because we have removed heavy industry along the shorelines and closed landfill sites.

"This study provides a comprehensive baseline for future management, and is designed to build understanding of the environmental impact of more than 1.5 million people living in the Swan Canning Catchment.

"Conservative guidelines were selected to assess contaminants because the rivers are ecologically sensitive and highly-valued. The study was not intended to provide advice on public health issues.

"The river sediment report focused on 20 sites, and showed that the middle section of the Swan River and two sites in the Canning River should be investigated further.

"This covers a stretch of the Swan River from Maylands to the central business district, and sites in the Canning River near Roe Highway and Bull Creek.

"Further testing will now be carried out in East Perth to get a better picture of whether the contaminants found are affecting aquatic life.

"We have prioritised this site because sediment samples taken there contained the broadest range of contaminants exceeding guidelines, and it makes sense to target work where we can gain the most information.

"Most surface water samples taken for the catchment drainage system report were from sites where people do not usually swim - in drains and tributaries entering the Swan and Canning rivers."

The Department of Health carries out routine microbial monitoring at sections of the rivers which have been shown over many years to be the sites where people swim and are potentially exposing themselves to contaminants in the water.

The most up-to-date public health information can be found on the Healthy Swimming website [www.healthyswimming.health.wa.gov.au](http://www.healthyswimming.health.wa.gov.au).

In line with internationally-recognised public health best practice, this website monitors trends in water quality and allows interpretations and comparisons to be made to the historic quality of the river.

As a general rule, people should avoid swimming for two days in the Swan Canning river system after heavy rainfall, as rain can flush pollutants from streets, gardens and farms through stormwater into the rivers.

As a long-standing precaution, the Department of Health advises people not to eat mussels, cockles, or oysters from the Swan and Canning rivers, as they are not tested to ensure they are free from contaminants.

For further information, and the Trust's summary paper on non-nutrient contaminants, log on to [www.swanrivertrust.wa.gov.au](http://www.swanrivertrust.wa.gov.au).

The four technical reports are available on the Department of Water website at <http://portal.water.wa.gov.au/portal/page/portal/Publications/RecentlyPublished>.

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