

5 May 2005

Pollution Police

In the Victorian town of Horsham, the local council has decided to fund a program to train hairdressers to develop counselling skills.

PIERRE HORWITZ, AQUATIC ECOLOGIST, EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY: It's amazing that we're living in a first-world country and we're still suffering the consequences of [raw sewage](#) going into our waterway, I mean, into this treasured area of ours, a playground for Perth residents.

MICHAEL EDWARDS: It's morning and the Swan River looks [pristine](#), but beneath the [apparent tranquility](#) hides up to 1 million litres of raw sewage, a spill from a nearby [treatment plant](#).

PIERRE HORWITZ: They're not everyday events but they're still too frequent.

MICHAEL EDWARDS: When there's a [spill](#), a [leak](#) or even an [emission](#) of environmentally harmful materials, Ken Raine and his pollution busters - an environmental response team - are the first on the scene. Their job is simple - contain the mess then clean it up.

The [Enforcement Unit](#) was created in April last year. It follows the work of the [Pollution Response team](#), chasing down polluters and then mounting cases for legal prosecution.

TONY POTTS, ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT UNIT: The team is 10 individuals who have been placed within the organisation with the department's resolve to restore credibility as the environmental watchdog.

MICHAEL EDWARDS: Tony Potts isn't your average environmental crusader. A former police detective who served on the Macro task force investigating the Claremont serial killings, he now heads an enforcement squad hunting serial polluters.

TONY POTTS: I did have 21 years as an investigator and the skills are really the same.

They are the ability to work and [conduct](#) an investigation [objectively](#), [impartially](#), [dispassionately](#).

MICHAEL EDWARDS: It's painstaking work. Tony Potts likens keeping the environment safe from pollution to keeping the streets safe from crime.

So far the unit's been involved in 160 investigations, laid 16 charges for environmental breaches and secured four convictions.

The Swan River spill is the latest in a series of pollution incidents in recent months and while each has been cleaned up at considerable cost, environmentalists argue it merely highlights the need for better prevention.

PIERRE HORWITZ: You've got to clean up a pollution spill - there's no two ways about it, if we're unfortunate to have one. But response teams need to develop some sort of proactive capabilities as well, so that you get a proper organisational systemic response.

MICHAEL EDWARDS: But the watchdogs say the risk of prosecution is a strong incentive for companies to do more to prevent accidents.

TONY POTTS: There is a tough enforcer on the block.

MICHAEL EDWARDS: Meanwhile, one of the Swan's most scenic sections remains off-limits to the public, and the Department of Environment still can't give any indication when it will be safe to get back into the water.

story notes

[raw sewage](#)

Sewage is wastewater from toilet systems. **Raw sewage** is sewage that has not been treated or cleaned.

[pristine](#)

Pristine means new, or in very good condition.

[apparent tranquility](#)

Apparent means seeming to be true. **Tranquillity** refers to a calm and peaceful state. So the **apparent tranquillity** of the river refers to the fact that the river seems to be calm and peaceful.

treatment plant

A sewage **treatment plant** is a place where sewage is treated and changed so that it is safe to put back into the water or use as fertiliser.



Here, the word **plant** refers to a factory and the machines inside it. Of course, the word **plant** also refers to a living thing with stems, roots and leaves such as a bush or a tree .

The verb to **plant** means putting a plant into the ground so it will grow.

It can also mean to put firmly in place.

Example: I **planted** myself on the chair.
He **planted** an idea in my mind.

spill

The noun **spill** refers to an amount of something that's come out of a container. There is also the verb to **spill** something, which is to make something to flow out of a container, usually accidentally.

leak

A **leak** is a hole in a container that liquid comes out of. To **leak** means to escape from a container or pipe through a hole or a crack.

emission

An **emission** is something sent out; usually liquid, gas or light. Notice that the verb form here is different. It is to **emit**.

Enforcement Unit

The enforcement unit are like pollution police. They are the people who try to stop pollution happening.

To **enforce** means to make people obey the law.

Pollution Response team

The response unit are the people who respond to pollution. They go to where it's happened, and clean it up.



conduct

Follow the link and listen to the different way **conduct** is pronounced when it's used as a noun.

more information: [conduct](#)

objectively, impartially, dispassionately

These words all end in the -ly suffix, and they are all adverbs. They qualify verbs.

The -ly suffix means they do things in the stated way.

Objectively means with reference to real facts, and not influenced by emotions.

Impartially means without supporting either side of an argument.

And **dispassionately** means without emotion, or with clear thought.
