

Blackwaters of Bribie Island

'Blackwater' creeks are a common feature of sandy coastal areas and sand islands. The dark stain of the water is caused by tannins, which are natural substances made up of various chemical compounds, including tannic acid from the bark and fruit of various plants. As plant material decays, tannins are leached out into the soil and into ground and surface water, resulting in transparent, acidic water that is darkly stained, resembling tea.



Tannin-stained creek on Bribie Island



Where canal estates are developed in these areas, blackwater drains into the canals, and it is a common observation that the hulls of fibreglass boats become stained by the tannins. Therefore, a variety of products is available on the market to remove fibreglass stains and protect boat hulls from becoming stained.

Moreton Bay Regional Council has conducted sampling across all canals on Bribie Island to determine the source of the blackwater entering the canals. Following heavy rains the groundwater table on the island can rise and remain very high, so that drains continue to discharge stained groundwater for some time at considerable rate and pressure. There is no active pumping of blackwater into canals.

Blackwater upwelling from a drain discharging into a canal on Bribie Island after heavy rain

