

# How do Bay Water Quality Reports work? – Questions Answered

Each day throughout the summer the EPA publishes water quality reports for 36 beaches in Port Phillip Bay. They issue two forecasts a day covering three periods:



- **Morning forecast** at 10am;
- **Afternoon forecast and Next Day forecast** at 3pm (these appear together when one of the pins is clicked).



Visit <https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/for-community/summer-water-quality/beach-report>

## Forecasts

These are ‘forecasts’ based on the likelihood that polluted water will reach the bay *after a forecast rainfall event*. There are three categories: Good, Poor and Fair.

 <p><b>Good</b> Suitable for swimming</p>	 <p><b>Fair</b> May not be suitable for swimming</p>	 <p><b>Poor</b> Not suitable for swimming</p>
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Forecast rating	Rating meaning
<b>Good</b>	Means that the water quality should be suitable for swimming based on all available information.
<b>Fair</b>	Means that the water quality <b>may not be suitable for swimming, and to look for signs of pollution before entering the water</b> (eg. discolouration in the water, drains running, rubbish, ect.).
<b>Poor</b>	Means that the water is not suitable for swimming.

Unless specifically stated (see “Forecast Rating” on the next page), these are not based on actual water quality testing.

For example, according to the EPA:

*‘A 10am Poor forecast is not showing anything about the water quality before 10am, but just that the Poor forecast was published on the website at 10am and that the rating was based on rainfall which was predicted to fall between 10am and the next forecast at 3pm.*

*If you swam before the rain fell on that same day, the water quality would likely be the same as in the previous forecast’.*

## Beach Water Quality Reports as a Guide

If you are really concerned about beach water quality, Poor indicates that the EPA warns the water is unsuitable for swimming. That is meant to be read in conjunction with the footnote, which will tell you whether it's based on forecast rainfall, historical data, or actual sampling results – if it's the latter, the site will usually be quite explicit and be updated once that risk passes.

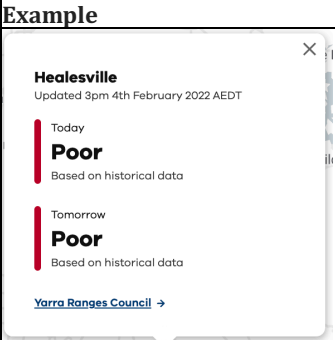

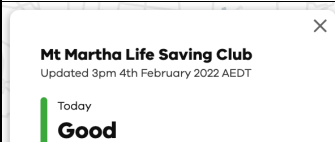
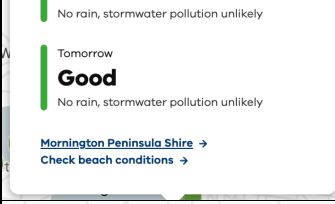
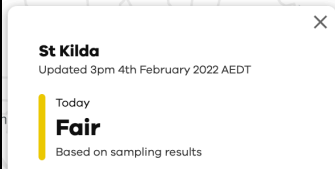
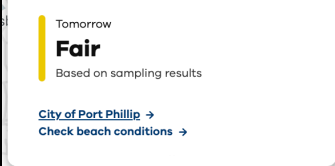
A 'Good' forecast does not mean you won't get ill. A 'Fair' forecast doesn't either but suggests a greater level of care. A 'Poor' forecast generally means it is unwise to enter the water but could be issued at 10am based on forecast rainfall that doesn't eventuate until later.

If there is any doubt DON'T SWIM. But ultimately it is about using all the evidence as a guide to making your experience safer.

Don't forget, these reports are not issue in winter. In which case, we all have to take greater care and use our best judgement.

## Forecast rating

The text below the forecast rating will state the reason behind why the forecast rating was given. EPA uses a few standard reasons to "explain" forecast ratings, listed in the table below:

Reason	Example	Details
Recent rain, stormwater pollution likely/possible		Rain has fallen recently in the area, so there may be drains flowing or stormwater pollution still present, causing a Fair or Poor forecast. For heavy rain events, we will keep the recent rain reasoning for several days after the rain event has passed as river flows and drains may still be flowing.
Forecast rain, stormwater pollution likely/possible		Rain is predicted to fall during the forecast period (e.g. between 3pm and 11:59pm for the afternoon forecast). The rain will be heavy enough to cause likely or possible stormwater pollution at the beach, and a Fair or Poor forecast.
Recent and Forecast rain, stormwater pollution likely/possible		A combination of the above factors is affecting the beach rating.
Recent and/or Forecast rain, however stormwater pollution unlikely		There has been recent rain, or rain is forecast, but the impact of the rain event was not/will not be enough to affect the water quality at the beach. This reason is usually used when a rain event is very light or localised.
No rain, stormwater pollution unlikely		There has been no rain at the beach, and there is none forecast, so it is unlikely that there will be stormwater pollution at the beach.
An alert has been issued for this beach		An incident (a swim advisory, dredging at the beach, an algal bloom, sewage spill, ect.) has happened at a beach, and this is causing a Fair or Poor forecast. Details about the incident will be written in an alert on the website. Note: If this reason is used, the forecast will link to a page where you can read the alert.
Based on sampling results		This is often used when sampling results are the reason behind a beach rating. For example, we have sampled the beach that week, and the results have come back which show Fair or Poor water quality.