

Sewer – Who is responsible?

“Sewage” or “Sewerage”?

Sewage is the waste water that flows through sewer pipes (waste water).

Sewer or sewerage refers to the system of pipes, pumping stations and treatment facilities that collect and treat the sewage. (Waste water network)

Sewer overflows and their impacts

When the household sewer is blocked or damaged, sewage can overflow into your house, your yard or onto the footpath. This can be both a serious health and an environmental problem which needs to be addressed very quickly.



Council may serve an Emergency Public Health Order under the *Local Government Act 1993* if a property owner does not promptly take action to repair blocked or damaged sewer pipes and carry out the necessary clean up.

Property owners’ responsibilities

Property owners are responsible for maintaining the pipes and fittings on your property up to where they connect to Sydney Water’s waste water network.

This is called your **point of connection**.

Environmental Health | Sewer – Who is responsible?

These pipes and fittings include all:

- private water, waste water and storm water pipes and taps
- pumps, tanks and other equipment connected to private pipes
- pipes that you share with other properties
- private pipes that service your property, even if they're not on your property.

Preventing blockages in your pipes

Blockages may be caused when something has been flushed down the toilet or sink that’s not appropriate. Things that have been found in blocked pipes included nappies, sanitary napkins, paper towel, tissues, wet wipes, even toys but the worst culprit are **fats, oils and grease** being poured down sinks.

Please dispose of used nappies, sanitary napkins, paper towel, tissues and wet wipes via your waste bin (red lid).

Oils should be put into jars and/or bottles and stored in a safe place until they can be taken to a NSW EPA Chemical CleanOut event (more information on Council’s website -

<https://www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/Services/Waste/Chemical-CleanOut>)

Another cause may be tree roots getting into your pipes. You can help stop those blockages by:

- choosing the right trees for your garden
- making sure you don't plant trees near any pipes.

A list of trees for your property can be found in Council’s Backyard Biodiversity Guide (link properly)

<https://www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/StGeorge/media/Documents/Environment/BBG-FINAL-PRINT.pdf>

Your local nursery can also give advice on trees and their root systems.



Signs of a Blockage

You might have a blockage in your pipes if you notice:

- your sinks, bath or toilet are slow to empty
- your toilet is not flushing properly or has overflowed
- your toilet or floor drain is making funny gurgling noises
- If wastewater (sewage) has actually overflowed.

Call a licensed plumber if you have a blockage in your private sewer pipes.

Sydney Water's Responsibilities?

Sydney Water is responsible for the wastewater pipes from their waste water network up to your **point of connection**.

The blockage is likely to be in Sydney Water's pipes if:

- the overflow is visible beyond your property boundary, e.g. from a manhole located on public land;
- your neighbours are experiencing the same problem;
- there is widespread flooding in your local area; or
- there is a continuous overflow and you are not currently using fixtures on your property.

If this is the case, please call Sydney Water on **13 20 90 (24 hours/7 days)** to report the issue.

For further information

Further information regarding sewer overflows please contact Council's Environmental Health Officer or Customer Service on:

Phone: 02 9330 6400

E-mail: mail@georgesriver.nsw.gov.au