

Sewer blockages

Introduction

Sewer blockages, also known as sewer chokes, occur in sewer pipes. They can be caused by tree roots infiltrating the pipes, or by unsuitable items being flushed down the toilet or washed down a drain, creating a blockage that disrupts the flow of sewage.

If you are noticing issues with your sewer system such as gurgling noises, odours, slow draining sinks and toilets, sewer overflow from internal floor wastes or from your external gully, you may have a sewer blockage.



A blockage in our sewerage system not only results in costly repairs and increased operational expenditure for Council, but also increases the risk of sewage overflow into our environment. A blockage in your internal pipes could also cost you thousands to fix in plumbing bills.

Preventing sewer blockages

To prevent sewer blockages, we recommend to only flush the 3P's: pee, poo, and toilet paper. Bag and bin items like tissues, wet wipes, paper towels, tampons, nappies, and other sanitary products, as these do not break down and can cause blockages.

- **Wet wipes & sanitary products:** Do not flush, even if labelled "flushable."
- **Kitchen waste:** Use a sink strainer and compost or bin food scraps.
- **Fats, oils, or grease:** Do not pour down the drain; let them cool and dispose of them in a sealed container.
- **Chemicals & paints:** Never pour down the sink. Use Chemical Cleanout Events or the Buttonderry Community Recycling Centre.
- **Garden tips:** Avoid planting trees near pipes to prevent root intrusion.
- **Overflow Gully:** To prevent overflows inside your house, ensure your property has a gully trap with no objects placed on it.

Keep a bin in your bathroom to help stop items such as tissues, wet wipes, paper towels, tampons, nappies, and other sanitary products from being flushed.

Sewer blockages

Identifying a sewer blockage

You can follow the steps below to help determine where the sewer blockage is:

1. Check the sewer inspection shaft in your yard. This should be located in the lowest part of your property; it can be in your front or back yard and should be close to the property boundary. Lift the lid to see if it is overflowing. If you feel pressure while removing the lid, stop and contact us.
2. If you are unsure if the sewer inspection shaft is clear, you can try pouring a bucket of water down the shaft. If the water does not flow away, there may be an issue within our system. If the water does flow away, the blockage might be in your internal plumbing.

If the sewer inspection shaft is clear, you may need a licensed plumber to clear a blockage in your house plumbing system. Council can help you determine if this is required.

Responsibilities and reporting

Council is dedicated to removing sewage from your property and treating it to the appropriate standard and prioritising public health and environmental protection.

Our goal is to provide a reliable service that ensures the wellbeing of both the community and the environment.

Council will:

- Respond as soon as possible to sewer issues. This will take place within 4 hours for urgent cases.
- Notify you in advance of any planned works that may interrupt your services.
- Minimise any damage or inconvenience in the event of a sewage spill.
- Schedule restoration works as required.
- Clear blockages that occur in our infrastructure.

Residents should:

- Ensure all stormwater connections are legally connected to the stormwater system.
- Maintain and repair all pipework from the point of connection on your property.
- Ensure the overflow gully is not obstructed and maintain access around inspection shafts and sewer manholes on your property to prevent sewer overflow inside your home and allow for inspection of sewer infrastructure.
- Contact Council in the first instance of a sewer blockage or overflow within your property's pipework. Council will advise if a plumber is required.

For sewer overflows from a manhole or blockages in our sewer mains, please report immediately to 02 4306 7900.

