

Thursday, August 07, 2014

Rags & Wipes Clog Inverloch Sewer

- **South Gippsland Water urges customers to think before they flush. Simply bin it, don't flush it!**

South Gippsland Water is urging all customers to consider what they flush down the toilet or drain. The Corporation's maintenance staff are removing 2 to 3 household buckets of rags, cloths and wipes that are clogging up the sewer and jamming Inverloch's Lhor Avenue sewer pump station every week! From inspection of the cloths it appears they are some sort of non-biodegradable cleaning cloth or wipe, possibly even a type of baby wipe.

Cleaning cloths, baby wipes and nappies are not designed to be flushed into the sewer and should always be placed in a rubbish bin. When changing a baby's nappy, always bin both the nappy and wipe, never flush these items. As the below images show, these items do not break down and instead clog pipes and jam expensive pump systems. This not only disrupts service to the community, but also means maintenance staff are having to strip down and re-build pumps at Inverloch's Lhor Ave pump station on a regular basis.

These rags and wipes are costing South Gippsland Water customers in excess of \$50,000 each year to keep the Inverloch sewer system operational. Not only do these items cause damage to pumps and pipe networks, they also impact on wastewater treatment once sewerage arrives at the wastewater treatment plant.

Inverloch's wastewater is treated using natural processes of air, sunlight and micro-organisms in wastewater lagoons. These rags and wipes add to the solid materials building up in the base of the lagoons and also block the essential sunlight from filtering through the water; this limits the treatment effectiveness and the quality of the water that is eventually returned to the environment.

The sewer system is not a rubbish bin. Never flush plastic wrappers, nappies, sanitary napkins, tampons, condoms, razor blades, syringes, surgical bandages, solid items and non bio-degradable liquids or chemicals down the drain or toilet.

South Gippsland Water is investigating the source of the rags and cloths and should the offender(s) be identified, the Corporation may pursue damages for the extensive costs incurred through ongoing repairs. It appears the majority of cloths are all of the same type and are either some kind of industrial cleaning cloth or potentially some type of baby/cleaning wipe. Customer's with information on the potential source of the wipes and rags can report this to South Gippsland Water on 1300 851 636.

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It is easy for you to do your part, simply bin it, don't flush it!

Images: The wipes and rags recently removed from the Lhor Ave, Inverloch Sewer Pump Station – 2 to 3 buckets of these wipes are removed each week and are costing South Gippsland Water customers \$50,000 per year in damage and increased maintenance costs.

