

Sewer Wipe Out – Wet Wipes Block Sewers

South Gippsland Water is battling with baby and cleaning wipes blocking its sewer systems. The 'wet wipes' situation has gotten so bad, that blockages are being cleared in Inverloch on an almost daily basis.

With the increased popularity of wet wipes for use with babies, as toilet wipes, make-up cleansers and now even household cleaning wipes, South Gippsland Water is finding that thousands of these wipes are being flushed into the sewer.

Managing Director of South Gippsland Water Philippe du Plessis said that, many of these wipes are marketed as being 'flushable' and that they are biodegradable, however they don't break down fast enough and cause blockages in sewer pipes and pumps. Toilet paper disintegrates in around 30 seconds, whilst wipes can remain in water and still not disintegrate after a week!"

Mr du Plessis went onto say that, "Most of South Gippsland Water's treatment plants are lagoon based, meaning that we rely on sunlight and micro-organisms to consume nutrients in the wastewater before it's returned back to the environment. Those wipes that do get through the sewer network, end up at the treatment plant, clog the lagoons and interfere with the micro-organisms. The wipes block sunlight from filtering through the water in lagoons, further reducing treatment effectiveness".

South Gippsland Water estimates that it is spending over \$50,000 a year in removing wipe balls from pumps and lagoon aeration systems. This is an expensive process, but also spare a thought for the staff who have this dirty job!

Over recent weeks South Gippsland Water has been working to spread the word on this issue in Wonthaggi and Inverloch. A new TV commercial will also run on local TV over the coming months.

South Gippsland Water is encouraging us all to "Stop it. Don't Block it." Simply bin any used wet wipes and DO NOT FLUSH, not even the ones that say 'flushable'. You'll be saving everyone money and helping to protect the environment.

For more information contact South Gippsland Water on 1300 851 636 or visit sgwater.com.au

Image: South Gippsland Water stand in front of the Inverloch Hub and wet wipes pulled from a sewer pump at Inverloch.

