

Information sheet

WASTEWATER – WHAT HAPPENS TO SEWAGE

What happens to the water that is flushed down your toilet or sink? Water that leaves your home is as important as the water that comes out of your tap. Just as clean water is treated before it comes into your home, the wastewater that leaves your property is also treated before it is reused or released into the natural environment.

The treatment and delivery of wastewater is important for our natural environment and for reuse. It is one of the services you pay for when you receive your water bill. Just like your drinking water, your wastewater is a valuable resource.

What is wastewater?

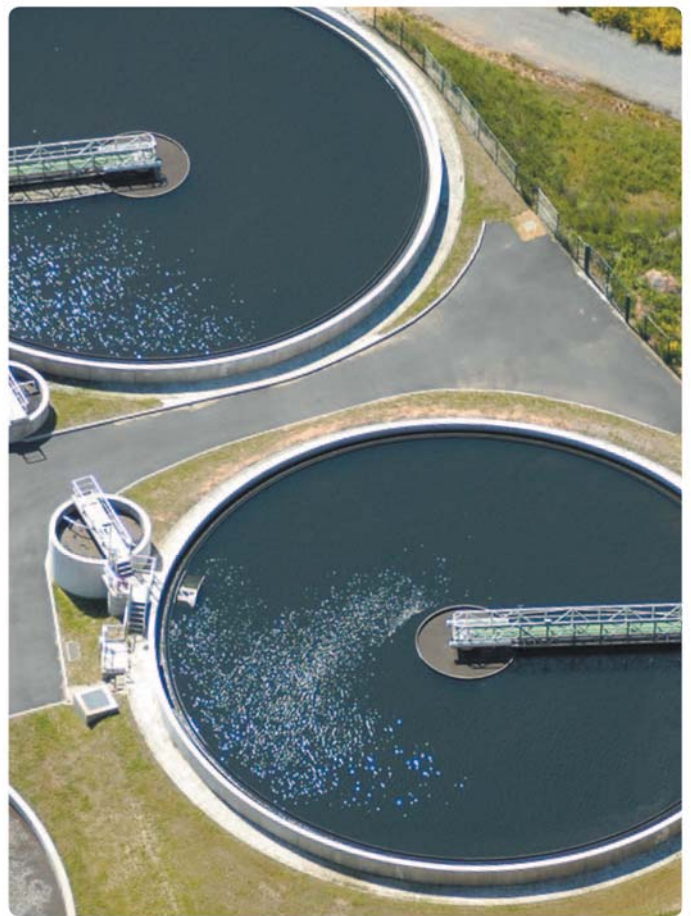
Wastewater, also known as 'blackwater' and sewage is all the water that leaves your property from your use of water in the bathroom and toilet, kitchen, laundry, etc. It also includes commercial and industrial wastewater.

Is wastewater measured?

Your local water provider measures the clean water supplied to your property with a meter usually located inside your front fence. Your wastewater is usually calculated as a percentage of the clean water you use or as a flat fee.

Why is wastewater collected?

All water is valuable and can be reused. Wastewater has a very small proportion of potentially dangerous chemicals and germs in it that need to be treated before the water can be returned to the natural environment or reused.



How is it collected?

Wastewater is collected in underground concrete sewage pipes that service your whole town or city. Wastewater travels by gravity and pumps to a sewage treatment plant.

South Gippsland Water

Wastewater - What Happens to Sewage

How is wastewater treated?

All treatment plants are a bit different. Generally there are three stages in the treatment as follows:

Stage One

The first stage includes screening out items such as toys and larger objects. The water is left still, allowing some of the sludge to settle and be removed, leaving mostly water.

Stage Two

The second stage uses nature to clean the water, often in big lagoons. Sunlight and natural micro-organisms will process almost everything that needs to be treated if you leave it long enough. The water is allowed to settle again and more sludge is taken out so it is quite clean now. All the sludge taken out is broken down using natural bacteria and used as fertiliser

Stage Three

The third stage is optional and used for final disinfection or to remove something like excessive nitrogen. Sunlight will eventually clean the water but ultra-violet treatment or chlorine is quicker if a lot of water is being treated.

Is wastewater safe?

All wastewater is tested to make sure it meets safety standards when it leaves the treatment plant.

What happens to wastewater?

Most wastewater is returned to rivers and the sea but is sometimes reused for agriculture and industrial uses.

Cost of water treatment

Wastewater treatment requires significant investment in a treatment plant to service your local area and has ongoing costs to keep it operating properly. Up to half of your water bill is used to pay for treating wastewater.

What can you do at home?

Never put anything in the toilet you did not eat or drink first. In the laundry please remember salt is difficult to remove and the major source of salt comes from washing powders. You can help a lot by using liquid and low impact detergents.