

SEWER MAIN TO HOUSE CONNECTION BLOCKAGES

Background:

As sewers and house drains age the frequency of blockages increases. The responsibility for rectification of these blockages and subsequent repair (if required) needs to be clear. As a general rule, council will pay to clear a blockage where the blockage is determined to be located in council's part of the sewerage system. While it is not possible to cover all cases, a number of position statements can clarify most situations as follows;

1. Councils Responsibility

- (a) Council is responsible for sewers, combined house drains in residential areas, house connection branches (including the jump up) and house branch drains (sewers) to the boundary of the property being serviced.
- (b) In the case of a spill from councils system the property owner, occupier or other person should advise council, who would arrange for the blockage to be removed and any rectification works instigated.
- (c) No work is to be carried out on any part of councils sewer system without approval by an authorised council officer.
- (d) Should the property owner, occupier or any other person call a plumber to rectify a blockage in their system and at some later time find out that the fault is councils responsibility the following applies;
 - (i) Once the fault was found to be councils responsibility the person who engaged the plumber or the plumber would advise a relevant council officer who would either;
 - (A) Arrange for a council worker or a contractor to clear the blockage and carry out rectification works. The plumber would be paid for any works carried out by the person who engaged them to carry out the works. Council may, subject to investigation, then reimburse all or part of the cost of any investigation work carried out.
 - Or (B) Authorise the plumber to carry out works as required. Council would then pay the plumber direct for the cost of any relevant investigation work or for any works which the authorised council officer instructed the plumber to carry out.
- (e) The determination of the extent of works considered to be councils responsibility shall in the first instance be determined by the attending Reticulation Section employee based upon advice provided, investigations and any other evidence.

2. Property Owners Responsibility

- (a) Except in commercial areas or Group Title (or Strata Title) development the property owner is responsible for house drains within their property down to the jump up on councils sewer or a junction with a house drain from another property.
- (b) On Multi Title or commercial developments where house drains are shared the responsibility for the shared house drain is a shared arrangement between the property owners.

- (c) Property owners are responsible for engaging a plumber to remove blockages in their house drains and for arranging any rectification works.

3. **Claims**

- (a) Except where an authorised council employee approves otherwise the person who engaged the plumber shall pay for the cost of all work carried out.
- (b) Council will upon receipt of plumbers account reimburse any person or property manager who has paid for work that has been carried out on councils systems and which is considered by council officers to be councils responsibility.
- (c) The determination of a claim for payment of works which are considered to be the responsibility of council will be made by the Operations Manager of the Reticulation Section based upon the claim, any available evidence and subsequent investigations.