

7 April 2009

Watch what you flush

Ongoing blockages at Westport sewage pump stations have spurred Council staff to again remind residents to consider what they put down their loos.

Blockages at both the Rintoul Street and Roebuck Street pump stations are continuing to raise concerns about what people are putting into both the sewerage and storm water systems.

Since an article in May last year, the Rintoul Street pump station has faulted nine times, with the Roebuck Street pump station faulting five times. Blockages have been the main reasons for all the faults.

“To date we have removed rags, tea towels, hand towels, singlets, polystyrene blocks and underwear,” says Council’s Asset Engineer, Martin Dobson. “These items are most probably a result of people putting these items down their property sewerage system.”

The sewage pumps receive household and business sewage, but also some of the town’s storm water flow. Separation of the wastewater and sewage systems was considered when planning for Westport’s wastewater treatment plant, but was discounted due to the cost being prohibitive for both the Council and property owners. Separating the two systems would have involved funding some new storm water reticulation, and burdened property owners with costs for property separation. The wastewater treatment plant and conveyance system were instead designed and sized to deal with additional storm water volumes. Because some pipes are used for both storm water and wastewater disposal, the items could be getting into the storm water system or being flushed through the toilet system says Mr. Dobson.

“These are items that should be disposed of through residential rubbish systems. We would ask residents to be aware of what items they are putting in these systems. Only ‘grey water’ and sewage should enter the wastewater system and only uncontaminated water should go down storm water grates.”

Costs to clear blockages are around \$300-\$400 per time. The pump station chamber must be opened and the pump lifted out with a hiab crane. The pump is then cleaned, unblocked and reinstalled. If the pump has to be dismantled to clear the blockage or to repair any damage, costs are higher as it involves unwiring, dismantling, repair and reinstalling.

ENDS



Further information; Martin Dobson (Asset Engineer)
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Photo attached; Photo showing rag removed from Rintoul Street pump station sewage pump.