

However, by following three simple steps you can protect yourself from such a nightmare.

Step 1

Keep waste out of sinks and toilets.



Step 2

Make sure rain and stormwater drains are separate from the sewerage system.



Step 3

Have a properly designed and operational Overflow Relief Gully (ORG).

Wide Bay Water Corporation is your first port of call for any concerns about the sewerage system.

If you think you may have a problem connection, or have questions about your drainage or overflow relief gully, call 4197 4197 and ask to speak to the Operations Room.

For any queries regarding stormwater, please call Hervey Bay City Council.

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PREVENTING SEWER OVERFLOWS



What's the big deal?

Each day we go to the toilet, brush our teeth, do the washing up and carry out other activities that send wastewater down our plumbing system and into the sewerage network.

Most of it we do without even thinking – it's part of our routine. And most of us would certainly never expect that anything we've flushed away could come back into our home.



Imagine the horror of walking into your bathroom or wandering out into your yard to discover a smelly mess flowing back from the sewer. NOT NICE! Yet that's exactly what can happen if the sewerage drains become blocked or flooded.

THREE STEPS TO MAKING SURE IT DOESN'T HAPPEN TO YOU!



Drains aren't bins – don't use them for waste!

Most of us at some time or another have unwittingly put things down our sinks or toilets that could easily block our drains. We assume they'll be carried away and disposed of somewhere else – but the reality is many can cause serious problems. Most things should always go in the bin.

Bathroom/toilet

Never flush tampons or other sanitary aids, nappies, condoms, cotton buds, bandages, razors or syringes. Most contain plastics that cannot be treated and are difficult to remove.

- Put a bin in your bathroom and/or toilet for disposing of these products.

Kitchen

Fats and oils, while liquid when hot, will quickly cool in your drains and solidify, causing blockages. Washing vegetable peelings and other scraps down the sink will also clog the system.

- Use paper towels to absorb liquid fats and place in the bin.
- Keep a container beside your sink for scraps and cooled fats or oils, and put them in the bin or a compost system.
- Use a sink strainer to catch food remnants from washing up.



Garden/garage

Paints, pesticides, oils and other hazardous chemicals can corrode your pipes. They also damage the environment and pose a serious health threat to workers maintaining the sewerage system.

- Take chemical and oil wastes to the hazardous materials drop-off at the council tip.

Paint tips

Use water-based paints if possible. Always squeeze and brush out paint on a newspaper or rag before cleaning.

- **Water-based**

Wash brushes in one bucket of water and rinse in another. Let paint settle overnight. Tip water onto the garden or grassed area. Wipe out paint residue with a newspaper or rag, let dry, and dispose of in the bin.



- **Oil-based**

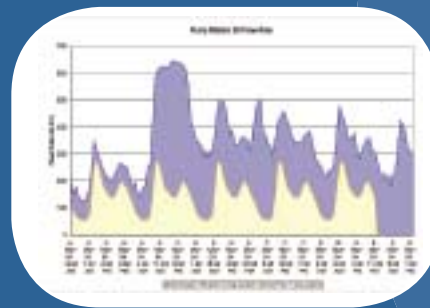
Clean brushes in turpentine. Allow waste mixture to evaporate to sludge, for disposal in the bin.

Keep stormwater out of the sewers

There are two separate systems of drains and pipes for wastewater in Hervey Bay – the sewerage network and the stormwater network. The sewerage system carries the daily flow of wastewater from bathrooms, kitchens and laundries, while the stormwater system carries rainwater runoff from roofs, paths and other hard surfaces.

There are good reasons for keeping the systems separate.

The sewerage network is designed to meet the wastewater needs of the population – not deal with millions of litres of stormwater runoff during rain. The sewer pipes are only so wide, and a massive flood of stormwater can cause sewage overflows.



The yellow area is the normal sewer flow. The blue area shows how much stormwater infiltrates the sewer system during times of rain.

Stormwater is relatively clean and can be discharged into lakes and waterways without treatment. However, if it enters the sewerage system it **must** be treated – adding an unnecessary cost burden to ratepayers.

So how does the stormwater get into the sewers if the systems are separate?

Often, it's by accident. Property owners have directed the flow from their downpipes to the nearest drain, not realising it is part of the sewerage network. In other cases, people have diverted excess water from swimming pools or their yard into the sewers instead of stormwater drains. All of these connections are illegal.

Property owners are responsible for ensuring their plumbing is in good order – this includes maintaining sewerage pipes and ensuring all property drainage is properly connected. Hervey Bay City Council can prosecute property owners with illegal connections – so it's important you identify any problems and rectify them.

If downpipes or stormwater diversions are located close to your sewerage pipe, or appear to drain into it, it's likely you have an illegal connection. Drainage plans, available from Hervey Bay City Council, will show you where the sewerage pipes are located on your property.

Have an Overflow Relief Gully (ORG) – just in case

Not every home has an Overflow Relief Gully – but every home should.

If your sewer blocks, an ORG will release any sewage overflow to the outside garden, keeping it away from the inside of your home.

An ORG is a drain-like fitting outside your home. It's lower than the other waste outlets in your house and has a vent-like top that pops off in an emergency. Older style homes are more likely to have 'disconnecter gullies or vents' that look similar to ORGs, but will not pop open in an overflow. Often these can be converted

Quick Tips for ORGs

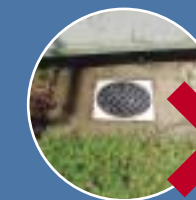


1. The Right Style:

Make sure you have a current model that does not have to be opened manually and will pop off completely in the event of a spill, so that the sewage can escape unhindered.

2. The Right Height:

To operate properly, the ORG must be lower than the other waste outlets in your home – including the toilet, all sinks, baths and showers. That way, if sewage backs up it will reach the ORG first and spill from there. In addition, the ORG should be 75mm above the surrounding ground to ensure stormwater cannot flow directly into it. In particular, make sure landscaping, garden beds and paving are not raised to the same height as the ORG.



In both of these cases the paving and landscaping is too high - stormwater will flow into the ORG, potentially causing a sewage overflow.

3. Keep it clear:

If the ORG is covered, sewage will not be able to escape during a spill. Keep pot plants and other items off the vent. Make sure any landscaping or garden beds do not cover the ORG or obstruct the path of the sewage in the event of an overflow.



4. General maintenance:

Check your ORG regularly to ensure it hasn't become blocked or obstructed. Correct any corrosion or silt build up that will prevent the top popping open. Ensure the drainage path is kept clear so that any spill can drain away quickly and not build up around the ORG itself.