

# CONSENT APPLICATION SUMMARY

# WASTEWATER OVERFLOW DISCHARGES

Gisborne District Council owns and operates the city wastewater system. Council has lodged a resource consent application, as one is now required under the Tairāwhiti Resource Management Plan, for the discharge of untreated wastewater from this network. These discharges occur by way of wet weather overflows (when the wastewater network is overloaded by rainwater in heavy rain) and dry weather overflows (which occur when there is a malfunction or blockage in the network).

Overflow discharges already occur from time to time and consent is sought on the basis of the DrainWise Programme and other measures to continue to reduce the frequency and volume of overflows and manage adverse effects.

A 20-year consent term is sought, subject to conditions of consent that will:

- Integrate the DrainWise Programme alongside other works and management actions to progressively reduce overflows to a practicable minimum;
- Ensure the system is designed and operated to best practice;
- Continue to respond appropriately to overflows when they occur; and
- Monitor and report performance.

## THE WASTEWATER NETWORK AND OVERFLOWS



The city wastewater system collects wastewater from houses, businesses and industry, and transports this via a network of pipes and pumping stations to the Wastewater Treatment Plant for treatment and disposal. The Council wastewater network is designed and operated in accordance with national engineering practice. However, it is only half of the city's wastewater system, the other half is located on private properties and is owned and operated by property-owners and occupiers.

In heavy and/or prolonged rain, the wastewater network may overflow as a result of too much stormwater getting into it. The main sources of stormwater are from private property through floodwaters flowing over or getting into gully traps, roof water being piped straight into private gully traps or leaky private wastewater pipes.

Overflow valves are manually operated and opened when necessary which directs these wet weather overflows (a mixture of stormwater and wastewater) to Gisborne's rivers. This is done so that wastewater does not back up and overflow onto private property. The location of the overflow points are shown on the map below. They are only operated as necessary

and in sequence – primary (P1 on the map) are opened first, then secondary (P2). Tertiary overflow points (P3) would be rarely used, and scour valves are for maintenance access to the network.

In the past 14 years, wet weather overflows have occurred two to three times per year. Through the consent, Council is aiming to reduce this to once every two years. To help achieve this, Council is implementing a compliance process that addresses privately-owned drainage.

Dry weather overflows are another type of overflow. These are unpredictable and can occur anywhere on the network, depending on where the blockage or problem occurs. Blockages often result from people putting foreign objects, hand wipes or material such as fat into the wastewater network. Dry weather overflows are generally small, occur for a short period of time, and are promptly responded to and fixed ensuring most do not reach a waterway.

Council undertakes education and network maintenance and upgrading to minimise dry weather overflows as much as possible and is aiming for an average of less than nine per year as a result of Council's network, which is in line with national best practice. Unfortunately, some problems and blockages are unpredictable and practically unavoidable.



**ONLY FLUSH  
THE 3 P'S**

## Gisborne Sewer Network





# EFFECTS OF OVERFLOWS

Wastewater overflows impact the community and the environment in a variety of ways. They can affect activities such as swimming, surfing, waka ama and kayaking, shellfish gathering, and mahinga kai and other Māori customary practices. Adverse effects result mainly from wet weather overflows and include:

- Water quality: primary water quality concerns are bacteria and, to a lesser extent, nitrogen and phosphorus. As wet weather overflows occur in heavy rain, they add to existing contaminant loads carried in runoff from up-catchment;
- Public health: health risks mainly arise through contact recreation (eg swimming) and shellfish harvesting/consumption in affected waters;
- Cultural and social values: wastewater overflows are unacceptable to Tangata Whenua - overflows encroach upon fundamental principles of customary social and spiritual rights and practices and affect the mauri of waters. Overflows may also affect people's ability to interact with freshwater and coastal environments;
- Ecological values: effects on aquatic organisms (ecology) are generally low, due to being infrequent, short term discharges. Overflows are unlikely to give rise to any toxic effects to ecology.



Dry weather overflows can cause the same adverse effects if they reach a water body, but they are typically small and of short duration such that effects are generally less and mostly can be contained.

Some of these effects, for example health risks, can be managed through measures such as advising people not to swim or take shellfish when water is affected by overflows for a period of time. However others, including cultural and social effects, cannot. To manage effects, Council's aim is to progressively reduce the frequency and volume of overflows to a practicable minimum.

# NETWORK MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVEMENTS

The consent is being sought on the basis of the substantial DrainWise Programme, together with:

- Improved overflow management;
- Appropriate overflow response and monitoring;
- Proactive network maintenance and operational and other network management improvements.

As the primary source of stormwater that gets into the wastewater system is from private property, the DrainWise Programme is necessarily focused on drainage on private property and continues on from the substantial work that Council has already undertaken to better manage and reduce overflows.

# FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUBMISSION PROCESS

Information sheets which outline the causes and impacts of overflows, and explain Council's approach to reducing overflows: [www.gdc.govt.nz/resource-consent-for-wastewater-overflows](http://www.gdc.govt.nz/resource-consent-for-wastewater-overflows)

The DrainWise Programme and how to help reduce overflows: [www.gdc.govt.nz/drainwise](http://www.gdc.govt.nz/drainwise)

To make a submission on this consent: [www.gdc.govt.nz/notified-resource-consent-applications](http://www.gdc.govt.nz/notified-resource-consent-applications)