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# **Corporation & Owner Responsibility for Sewer Blockages Procedure**

**COR/09/927**

**September 18**

**Gippsland Water**

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	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Written by</b>	Shane Hutchinson	19 Dec 2013
<b>Reviewed by</b>	Nic Moss	1 March 2017
<b>Authorised by</b>	Peter Skeels	1 March 2017

## Document History

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Description of Update / Change</b>
4	June 2011	Mick Hammett	Reviewed & insert ORG information
5	August 2012	Catherine Kanara	Reviewed & new combined ppty diagram
6	January 2014	Shane Hutchinson	Review and reinforcement of reinstatement process
6.1	March 2015	Catherine Kanara Michelle Willhelme	Reviewed & update for regulations 1 metre responsibility
7	March 2016	Michelle Willhelme	Reviewed and updated regulation references
7.1	Oct 2016	Catherine Kanara	Update Sewerage connection as laid sanitary drainage plan as per PPTY connections
8	1 March 2017	Nic Moss	3 Yearly Gippsland Water Operational Policy Review. Retitled Procedure & updated dates.
8.1	4 July 2018	Catherine Kanara	Content heading for Procedure Exclusions updated
9	22 August 2018	Catherine Kanara Michelle Willhelme	Reviewed and updated

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# 1 Procedure Statement

This procedure “Corporation & Owner Responsibility for Sewer Blockages” is required to ensure that:

- Customers gain a clear understanding of their area of ownership and responsibilities of the property drain;
- Customers understand their responsibilities associated with trees and structures over property drains and the authorities assets;
- Plumbers can more clearly determine the responsibility for a sewer blockage occurring in the property or Gippsland Water’s asset;
- Plumbers are supplied with a field response protocol if they wish to apply to Gippsland Water for reimbursement of costs associated with clearing sewer blockages;
- Gippsland Water Officers can make a determination of responsibility that is based on a transparent and structured procedure.

Gippsland Water aims to work closely with plumbers to ensure that our customers benefit from efficient and effective processes.

**The authority for this procedure is governed by;**

- Water Act 1989
  - o Section 148 (Structures over works)
  - o Section 149 (Removal of trees)
  - o Section 150 (Notice to Repair)
- Water Amendment Act 2012
  - o Section 303A (Issues of evidence of proof)
- Water (Estimation, Supply and Sewerage) Regulations 2014
  - o Part 3 - Sanitary Drains, Sanitary Drainage Plans and Maintenance (r19 Maintenance of sanitary works)
  - o Part 3 - Sanitary Drains, Sanitary Drainage Plans and Maintenance (r 20 Maintenance of sewerage works and extended sanitary works)
- Gippsland Water Customer Charter 2018
  - o Part B Section 9.5 Wastewater blockages.
  - o Part B Section 11.7 Wastewater Pipes.
  - o Part B Section 11.8 Notice to Repair.
  - o Part B Section 11.9 Removal of Trees.
  - o Part C Attachments Appendix 1 – Extent of Gippsland Water’s Responsibility with Respect to Reticulation Assets.
  - o Part C Attachments Appendix 2 – Pressure Sewer Systems
- Gippsland Water Build Over (and adjacent to) Assets Policy.
- Gippsland Water Tree Removal Process.

# 2 Procedure Exclusions

This procedure does not apply to Gippsland Water’s Pressure Sewer Systems, located in Seaspray, Coongulla, Glenmaggie and Lochsport. All sewer related issues within these townships should be referred to Gippsland Water’s Coordinators prior to undertaking works.

### 3 Responsible Officer

The Manager, Field Services is responsible for the implementation and maintenance of this procedure.

### 4 Key Definitions

For the purposes of this procedure, except where otherwise shown:

“**Approved**” means acceptable to, authorised by or approved by Gippsland Water;

“**Asset**” any part of a water supply and/or sewerage system that is the responsibility of Gippsland Water;

“**CCTV**” means closed circuit television. Gippsland Water has cameras and personnel to conduct internal inspections of sewer mains and property connections. These can assist in identifying faults. Gippsland Water does not reimburse customers or plumbers working for customers for external providers to conduct camera inspections.

“**Combined property sewer drain**” means a property sewer drain that is connected to the Corporation’s wastewater system in combination with another or several other property sewer drains. Refer to [Appendix C](#)

“**Connection Point**” – the point provided by the authority during the construction of the sewer main. Usually terminating just inside the property boundary (up to 1 meter), or as an ‘OB’ on the main.

“**Corporation**”– means an authority, board, business, corporation with the responsibility for defining and authorising design requirements, construction requirements, for operating and maintaining or defining operation and maintenance requirements for water supply and/or sewerage system or systems;

“**Drain**” means a pipe or conduit laid above or below the ground surface, including all associated fitting and equipment, for the conveyance of sewer or trade waste; (usually 100mm Diameter and inside the property)

“**Field Notes**” or “**as built**” construction drawings on the sewer main which may include property connection point details;

“**Gippsland Water**” means Central Gippsland Water Corporation trading as Gippsland Water.

“**HCB**” is house connection branch on the corporation’s sewer main;

“**Inspection Shaft**” or “**IS**” is an inspection shaft to ground level that allows access to the property connection for the purpose of locating, inspecting and clearing of the drain and is to be installed as per AS/NZS 3500.2:2015 section 4.4 Inspection Shafts and Boundary Traps;

“**Jump - Up**” or “**JU**” is the vertical structure that connects two pipelines at different levels. This structure may not necessarily be Gippsland Water’s asset;

“**Service Request Number**” or “**Work Order Number**” or “**Job Number**” is issued to plumbers as a reference to specific jobs and is used by Gippsland Water for auditing. **These numbers are not a purchase order and are not a guarantee of payment;**

“**OB**” means oblique junction on the sewer main that forms part of the HCB, and is usually 100mm in pipe diameter;

“**IO (Inspection Opening)**” or “**27A**” means an access opening with a fitted cap or plug in the pipe or pipe fitting on or near the connection point for the purpose of inspection, testing or clearing obstructions.

"**ORG**" means Overflow Relief Gully. Refer to [Appendix A](#)

"**Owner**" means any legal entity who is the owner of the property and/or who has responsibility for the property;

"**Property Drain**" is the owner's drain that connects to the authorities' asset;

"**Property Plans**" are plans of the property drain which are normally submitted by the plumber after construction, although not all properties have property plans. Some properties have a "design" and/or "as constructed"/"as built" plan. Plumbers should practice caution when assessing drawings, as "design" drawings may not reflect what has been installed on the property by the plumber;

"**Tie**" is terminology referring to the corporation's connection point. The tie measurement may be recorded on the property plans and field notes;

## 5 References

Other relevant documents in relation to this "Corporation & Owner Responsibility for Sewer Blockages Procedure" are;

- Plumbing Regulations 2008
- AS/NZS 3500.2:2018 (Part 2 – Sanitary Plumbing & Drainage);
- Water Services Association of Australia WSA 02:2014 Gravity Sewerage Code of Australia – Version 3.1:
- Victorian Building Authority – <http://www.vba.vic.gov.au/>
- Sewer Spill Management Procedure – TRIM: [COR/05/26696](#)

## 6 Application/Step Process for Sewer Blockages

**A general overview of the sewer blockage procedure. Failure to follow this procedure may result in rejection of all or part of any claim submitted to Gippsland Water;**

1. When a plumber receives a call from a customer to "clear the blockage", the plumber should obtain as much reference material as possible to safely assess the requirements of the job. These reference materials should include "property sewer plans" (submission of these will be required for Gippsland Water to consider reimbursement);
2. The plumber should read and understand the property sewer plan to identify safety issues and ensure staff are suitably trained and experienced to carry out the works (e.g. excavations greater than 1.5 meters in depth).

Remember, when reading sewer property plans consider –

- Are dimensions in feet or metres?
  - Reference points – is it an old fence that has been removed, are the fence boundaries located where they were when the plumber initially drew up the sewer property plan?
  - Are "Tie" or "Connection Point" measurements referenced?
3. Upon attending site, the plumber believes the blockage exists in Gippsland Water's asset, they must call Gippsland Water to report. Gippsland Water can check that the reticulated sewer mains have flow (upstream and downstream of the reported property address). Gippsland Water may make an assessment on some sewers using available data, which may include history of blockages on that property, recent cleaning of sewer main, recent upgrade of sewer main, and geographical information;

4. Gippsland Water will report back to the plumber informing them of the result of the “mains check”, stating whether the “mains are clear” or the “mains are blocked”
5. If the main is clear the plumber should continue with works to “clear the blockage” as requested by the customer. The plumber must contact Gippsland Water to request a new workorder on behalf of the customer.
6. The workorder issued on behalf of the customer is only for future reference and is not a purchase order or guarantee of payment.
7. If the plumber is having problems clearing a blockage in the Gippsland Water area of the connection, the plumber is encouraged to contact Gippsland Water to speak to the CCTV team for further advice or request a CCTV inspection.
8. The plumber clears the blockage and if the plumber believes the blockage is in Gippsland Water’s asset, the plumber must inform Gippsland Water at the time of the determination
9. Should the plumber believe he has located the blockage beyond the owner’s area of responsibility after “rodding” the drain, the plumber should stop work and notify Gippsland Water, who will advise to either:
  - (1) leave the job; or
  - (2) continue clearing the blockage on behalf of the customer.
10. **Plumbers should not carry out works that they are not trained, experienced and competent to do. This may include but is not limited to;**
  - **Excavation and Trenching Techniques**
  - **Trench Safety**
  - **Confined Spaces Entry**
  - **Plant (Plant Operations)**
  - **Plant (Maintenance)**
  - **Traffic and Pedestrian (Public) Management**
  - **Fall Prevention**
  - **Work on GW assets**

**For assistance in understanding the minimum safety requirements for tasks, contractors should reference, Worksafe at [www.workcover.vic.gov.au](http://www.workcover.vic.gov.au)**

**Gippsland Water should be contacted prior to the execution of works that involve the above risks on 1800 057 057. Gippsland Water only allows suitably trained, experienced, qualified, and competent persons to work on its assets.**

11. At all times, the plumber must be cautious of interpreting and communicating responsibility for a blockage to the customer. Until an audit has been conducted by Gippsland Water, responsibility for payment cannot be determined.
12. Reimbursement by Gippsland Water will only occur after an audit of the works is conducted confirming the responsibility for “clearance of the blockage” was Gippsland Water’s responsibility. The plumber must supply as part of this claim the following data to allow for an audit to occur;
13. Plumbers are not to advise customers that Gippsland Water will/will not perform a CCTV inspection at the property drain or connection point. An audit or CCTV inspection is at Gippsland Water’s discretion.
14. Plumbers must give consideration to “**blockage caused by owners trees**”, “**structures over connection point**” and “**combined drains**” as responsibility may impact on the claim. Refer to responsibility of these blockage causes, within this document.

**REFER TO REQUEST FOR REIMBURSEMENT CLAIM FORM [Appendix E](#)**

- a. The entry point of the rods or pressure hose to be supplied on an “As Built Property Drainage Plan”;
- b. The total length of rods or pressure hose used;
- c. A fully itemised account indicating the hours worked at an hourly rate applicable, the cost of machinery hire, and itemised material costs;
- d. Any further evidence that supports the claim.

**Accounts are to be forwarded to Gippsland Water within 30 working days of the work to Gippsland Water for auditing and payment if the blockage is found to be in Gippsland Water’s area of responsibility.**

**(This will be determined by Gippsland Water Officers – not the plumber)**

## **7 Reinstatement Works Occupational Health and Safety**

1. Plumbers, or their sub-contractors, must make temporary repairs to all unpaved off-carriageway surfaces, including nature strips.
2. Plumbers, or their sub-contractors, must make temporary repairs to the paved surfaces and leave surfaces in a safe condition, unless given written permission of the property owner, council or other authority that have care, management or control of the site.
3. Unless a clearance is obtained from the relevant Authority, the service provider must maintain any temporary repairs to paved and unpaved surfaces until a permanent repair is done.
4. Plumbers, or their sub-contractors, must grade the final surrounding surface to suit the level of all surface structures and fittings
5. All surfaces must be restored to the condition in which they were found before the work commenced
6. Reinstatement works are in general carried out within Gippsland Water customer properties, road reserves and public spaces. Reinstatement works require successful identification and management of all work site hazards.
7. Hazards specific to reinstatement works can include, but not limited to;
  - Traffic management
  - Public safety
  - Overhead power lines
  - Underground utility assets
  - Pedestrian and public safety
  - Manual Handling
  - Mobile Plant
  - Outdoor Work (working in extreme temperature/weather)
  - Use of powered hand tools
  - Hot work
8. Plumbers, or their sub-contractors, are required to have personnel under its engagement suitably trained, competent, and have the tools and equipment available to manage identified risks.
9. Plumbers should obtain evidence of damage to owners or road reserves prior to conducting works.



10. Plumbers, or their sub-contractors, utilising the work order or service request number associated with the works are to keep Gippsland Water informed of reinstatement status. This includes:
  - a. where temporary reinstatement has been made, and
  - b. when final reinstatement is to be completed; or
  - c. inform of any issues associated with ability to complete reinstatement
11. The work site remains the responsibility of the plumber conducting blockage clearance works for Gippsland Water until it has been reinstated and is safe for public access.

## 8 Gippsland Water Audits

### Customer or plumber reimbursement:

Prior to any reimbursement being considered or approved, an audit is to be conducted by Gippsland Water's Field Services department. An officer will check the relevant design and as-built plans of the Customer's house drain and may undertake a visit to the site to verify the claim. This may also require inspection by CCTV camera at Gippsland Water's cost.

Gippsland Water does not take responsibility for managing the asset constructed by the plumber for the Customer.

### The following check list items must be satisfied for reimbursement of costs:

1. The plumber attended site to assess the blockage.
2. The plumber assessed fault then called for mains checks
3. The plumber obtained a workorder or service request to continue on behalf of the customer
4. A reimbursement form and property plans identifying location of blockage are included with the request.
5. If the plumber was not willing to proceed with the clearance, reimbursement may not be considered as they have not fulfilled the engaged task of "clearing the blockage".

**To assist the plumber in supplying Gippsland Water with the required information, a template "REQUEST FOR REIMBURSEMENT CLAIM FORM" has been supplied at the end of this document. Refer to [Appendix E](#)**

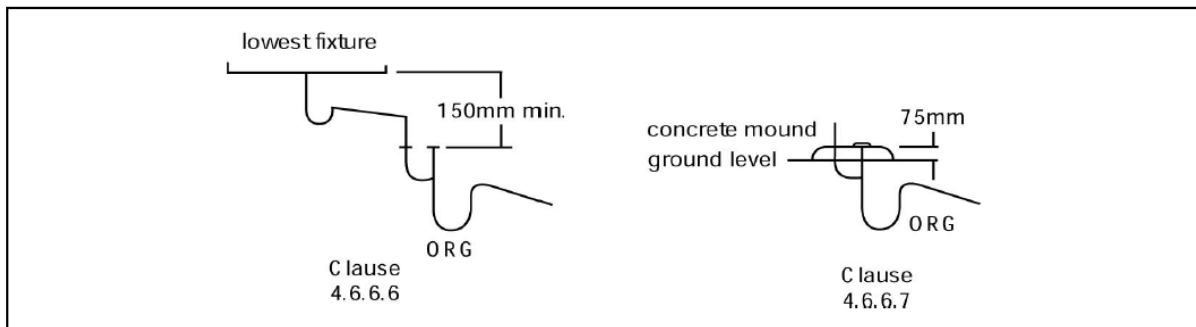
**Gippsland Water requests completed reimbursement claim form is attached to the invoice for clearing of sewer blockage works.**

## 9 Procedure Review

This procedure and the information contained within will be reviewed by the Manager Field Services, on a 3 yearly basis unless work practices or regulations change and impact this procedure (in line with Gippsland Waters' operational procedure review process).

## Appendix A: ORG – Overflow relief Gully

Ref: The Plumbing Industry Commission's Web-site - [www.pic.vic.gov.au](http://www.pic.vic.gov.au)



### Whose responsibility is it to certify that overflow relief complies?

It is the licensed plumber or drainer's responsibility to determine the overflow relief gully levels prior to commencing drainage work. It may be necessary to work with the builder to determine levels in relation to the slab floor and finished ground. If an approved overflow relief gully cannot be provided, or if there is any doubt before commencing drainage work, a reflux valve must be fitted in accordance with *AS/NZS 3500.2*

### What are the responsibilities of the plumber completing the overflow relief gully at the finishing off stage?

Reflux valves, if fitted, must be permanently accessible and have the ability to be fully serviced and maintained from ground level. There must be no ingress or surface water to any relief gully or overflow ground vent. **In conclusion**, co-operation is required between the builder, drainer and plumber at the planning stage of the job to overcome potential problems.

### Why is overflow relief required?

Water Authorities' sewers may surcharge due to infiltration of stormwater, blockages or a sewer collapse. This surcharge has the potential to endanger health and cause internal damage to buildings. For this reason, the consumer must be protected through the installation of an overflow relief gully, overflow ground vent or reflux valve.

### What are the requirements for a sewage overflow relief gully?

The top of the overflow relief gully riser must be at least 150 mm lower than the lowest fixture connected to the drain. This would normally be measured from the finished level of a shower grate. To prevent the ingress of surface water, the overflow relief gully riser must be at least 75mm above natural finished level. If the surrounding surface is paved, the riser must be finished at a level that does not permit ponding or ingress of stormwater.

### Drainage Overflow Relief

*AS/NZS 3500.2* requires an overflow relief gully or alternative.

Information provided is an extract from: [The VBA Technical Solutions Sheet 3.05 Drainage – Drainage Overflow Relief](#).

Further technical information can be obtained by visiting: [www.vba.vic.gov.au](http://www.vba.vic.gov.au)

This information is a 'Technical Solution' to clarify issues associated with the provision of overflow relief for protection against surcharge. Failure to protect against sewage surcharge is a **Major Fault Item**.

Alternatives to an overflow relief gully may be an overflow ground vent or reflux valve with a shaft and approved type cover at surface level.

## **Appendix B: Examples of Common Situations / Responsibility:**

### **The sewer reticulation main is situated outside the property:**

Gippsland Water is responsible for the house connection branch (HCB) from the main to just inside the property boundary (up to 1 metre inside boundary).

The HCB constructed by Gippsland Water usually terminates inside the property boundary with either an inspection opening (27A) or jump-up or as indicated on the property plan or field note.

Gippsland Water assumes responsibility downstream (sewer main side) of either the 27A inspection opening or the jump up or designated connection point.

Where the property connection connects direct to a manhole outside the property boundary, the ownership of blockage is determined by who constructed the property connection. This is a case by case determination, in this event the plumber must consult with Gippsland Water prior to works to determine ownership of sewer blockage, usually on the outside of the manhole.

### **The sewer reticulation main is situated inside the property boundary:**

This situation is the same as the previous example (27A) or Jump-up, or if the HCB is connected to a manhole situated in the Customer's property, Gippsland Water assumes responsibility from the connection point directly out of the manhole only.

Plumbers must note that in some circumstances the property riser ("jump up") may not have been constructed by the corporation. If this is the case, it is the owner's responsibility to clear the blockage. Check property plans or field notes as it may have been constructed with an 'OB' on the main.

### **Blockage caused by tree roots that originate from the customers property:**

If the blockage is caused by tree roots from within the customer's property, the customer is responsible for the clearance.

If the tree roots have entered Gippsland Water's asset, any costs incurred in the repair/replacement may be recovered from the customer.

If Gippsland Water's assets are damaged by trees within a customer's property, the "Gippsland Water Tree Removal" procedure may be applied.

### **Customer assets located over the connection point:**

When a customer has an asset that is located over the connection point or less than 1m laterally away from that point, it is the customer's responsibility to clear the blockage and or repair the connection.

An asset can be, but is not limited to, a shed, garage, house, barbeque, fence, wall, retaining wall, garden bed, swimming pool, or other structure.

Where a sewer main exists in a customer's property, the customer cannot build over any connection points within their property (this can be adjoining properties connection points, not just the customer's property connection point).

Customers must refer to the "Gippsland Water Build Over (and Adjacent to) Assets" Policy at the construction stage of any asset. This policy can be obtained from Gippsland Water's Land Development Team.

### **Cut and fill of allotments**

If the land has been cut into a slope to allow for a concrete slab and the surface level of the 'IS' is less than the surface height of the closest manhole, then a reflux valve will need to be installed or other conditions will apply.

### **Unexpected materials causing blockages:**

Where the blockage is caused by discharge or disposal of materials that would not reasonably be expected to be accepted into Gippsland Water's sewerage system, the owner of the offending property will be responsible for the clearance of sewer blockage. These events will be evaluated on a case by case basis. ie; toys, plastic containers etc.

### **Combined property sewer drainage systems:**

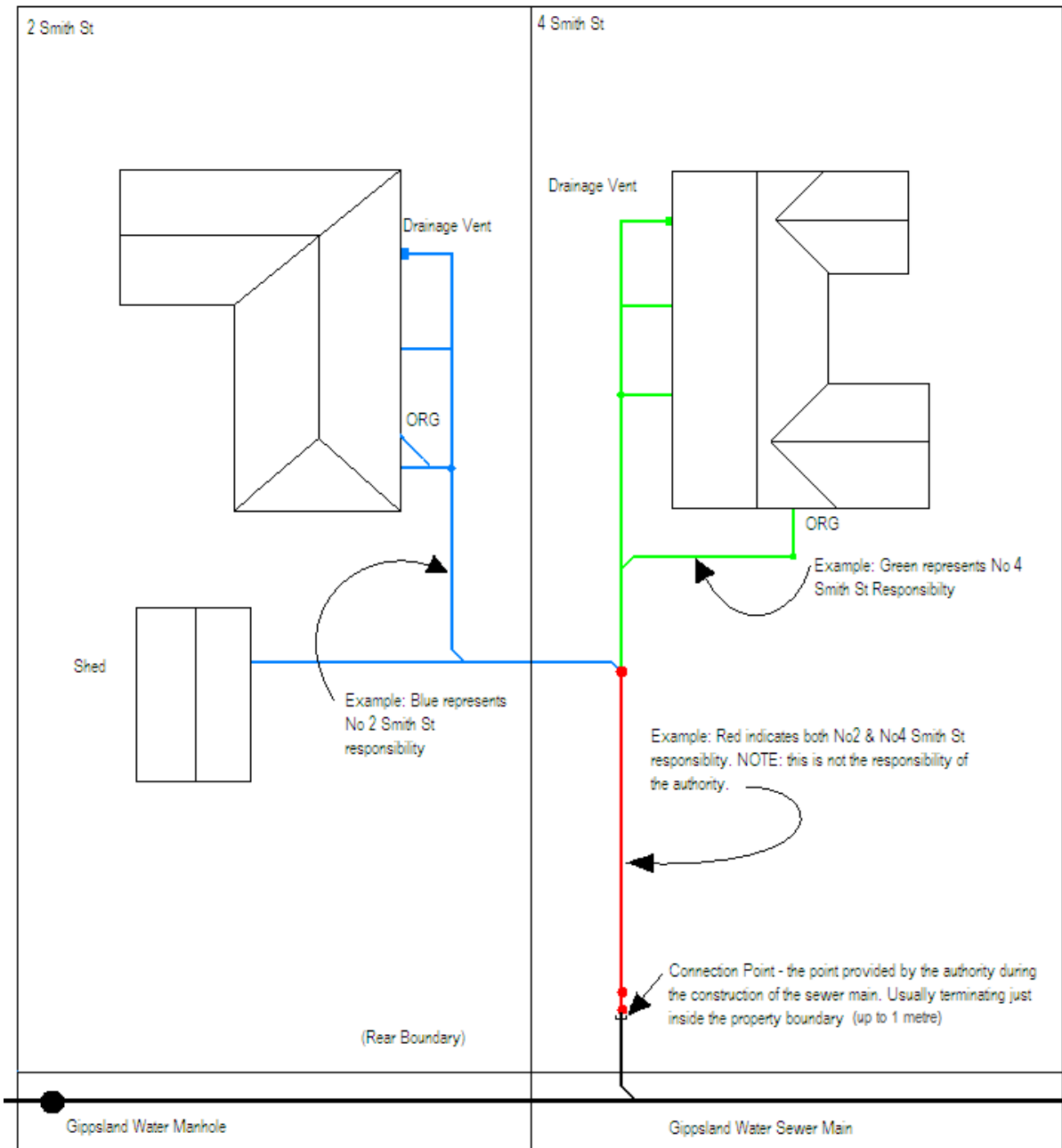
Gippsland Water's responsibility is the point provided by the Authority during construction of the sewer main, usually just inside the property boundary (up to 1 metre).

Owners of properties connected to Gippsland Water assets are responsible from the property connection point to the point at which the individual properties connect to the common connection branch. Note that trees over the combined drain section are the responsibility of the owner on which this drain exists and blockages caused by the trees on this property are the responsibility of that owner.

Branches off the combined drain to individual properties are the responsibility of the property that this branch services.

Refer to [Appendix C](#) for drawing of ownership determinations on combined property sewers.

## Appendix C: Combined Property Sewer Drainage Ownership



**GIPPSLAND WATER phone 1800 050 500**

## PROPERTY SERVICES

### SEWERAGE CONNECTION

### AS LAID SANITARY DRAINAGE PLAN

**LEGEND**

O.R.G Overflow Relief Gully  
 D.G Disconnector Gully  
 D.V Drainage Vent  
 U.B.D Unventilated Branch Drain  
 R.V Reflux Valve

I.O Inspection Opening  
 I.S Inspection Shaft  
 I.C Inspection Chamber  
 F.W.G Floor Waste Gully  
 Y.D.G Yard Disconnector Gully

J.U Jump Up  
 M.H Manhole  
 S.V.P Soil Vent Pipe  
 Y.G Yard Gully

### DETAILS OF PROPERTY

Owners Name:	VBA/PIC no:	Parcel no:
Lot/Street no:	Street:	Town:



North

**FIXTURES**

- 1 Water Closet
- 2 Bath
- 3 Basin
- 4 Shower
- 5 Sink
- 6 Trough

Licensed Plumber:

License no:

Signature:

Date: / /

**Please forward to:** CIS Services (Aust)  
**Postal Address:** Level 1, 4 Florence Street  
 BURWOOD VIC 3125  
**Phone:** 9835 5511  
**Fax:** 98355505 9835 5515 plans@cis1.com.au

NOTE: The VBA/PIC Consent Number is issued on the condition that the plumber installs all works and downstream infrastructure to AS3500 - Plumbing Code Standard. For technical assistance the Victorian Building Authority can assist, free call 1300 815 127.

## Blocked Sewer Request for Reimbursement Form

Gippsland Water Service Request / Work-order Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of works: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of works: \_\_\_\_\_

Was a property plan obtained:  YES

Where was blockage identified:

\_\_\_\_\_ (should show on property plan and attach)

Detail of work carried out and blockage cause:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Breakdown of Plant, Materials, and Labor:**

Item	Description	Qty / Hours	Charge Rate	Cost (ex GST)
Labor				
Plant				
Materials				
			Total ex GST	\$
			GST	\$
			Total inc GST	\$

Inspection Shaft installed to ground level as required by AS/NZS 3500.2:2015  YES

Work site Reinstated to customers' expectations  YES

Any further information / suggestions / Gippsland Water follow ups cause:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Mail or email this completed form with your invoice, property plan, and all other supporting evidence to;

**Accounts Payable**  
**Att: Field Services Administration Officer**  
**Gippsland Water**  
**PO Box 348**  
**Traralgon, Victoria 3844**  
**Email: [AccountsPayable@gippswater.com.au](mailto:AccountsPayable@gippswater.com.au)**