

POLICY



Date adopted: 11/07/2017
File no: 261159-1
Minute number: 191/2017

Policy title: **CLEARING OF BLOCKED HOUSE DRAINS WITHIN PRIVATE PROPERTIES**

Directorate: ROAD & WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Branch: WATER OPERATIONS

Policy objective: The major objectives of this policy are to:

- (a) provide an environmentally responsible, cost effective, commercial service in clearing blocked house drains within the Logan City with a view to minimising inconvenience to the Council's customers
- (b) develop and enhance a strong customer focussed business partnership with local drainage contractors in the Logan City, for private works associated with blocked house drains
- (c) establish the boundaries of ownership and responsibilities of the house drains, thus eliminating uncertainties and disputes between owner/agents and private drainage contractors
- (d) provide guidelines to private drainage contractors on the Council's preferred procedures in dealing with sewer blockages in private properties, which are actually associated with the Council's connections, sewers or sewer manholes
- (e) improve the efficiency of processing requests by private drainage contractors for clearing of blocked house drains associated with the Council's infrastructure
- (f) safeguard the sewerage system against damage to the Council's infrastructure.

Policy scope:

1. Ownership and responsibility

- (a) The Council will respond to a complaint or request from a resident in relation to a blocked sewer or house drain by visiting the site, inspecting the problem and advising the resident whether the blockage is in the sewer or the house drain.

- (b) The Council's ownership and responsibility within the sewerage system terminates at the first inspection opening of the property connection. The Council owns and maintains the connection, jump up and pipe work up to and including the inspection opening, as a part of the sewerage system.
 - (c) Blockages in the Council's sewerage system up to and including the first inspection opening of a property service are the responsibility of the Council and these will be cleared by Council employees. Private drainage contractors shall not carry out any works in the Council's sewerage system without the approval of the Council.
 - (d) Blockages in the house drains upstream of the sewerage system owned by the Council are the responsibility of the property owners.
2. ***Blocked house drainage services and reimbursement criteria***
- (a) The Council will provide the service, to Logan City residents, of clearing blockages in private house drains at a standard fee which is reviewed annually (outlined in Council's Register of Cost Recovery Fees). This service will be provided only at the request of property owners. Blocked house drain requests by tenants will not be attended to by the Council without the permission of relevant owners or agents, except for health reasons.
 - (b) The Council may also provide the service to repair or clean the property service pipes, on request from property owners. These works should be charged separately, as per the Council's rates for private works, considering actual time and resources allocated for the works.
 - (c) Where a private drainage contractor is called out by property owners in the first instance, the payment for any work undertaken by the contractor for clearing a blockage in the house drain is the responsibility of the property owner. If the blockage proves to be in the Council's sewer, the private drainage contractor, not the property owner, will be reimbursed by the Council for the time spent on the site, provided the invoice is duly authorised by the property owner or agent. Any work undertaken without authorisation will not be reimbursed. The Water Operations branch will process these reimbursements.

Definitions:

Not applicable.

Policy statement:

The following procedure is to be undertaken for this policy:

1. ***Blocked house drainage services***

On the basis that Water Operations will not actively promote the clearing of private sewer blockages as a business, the following procedure is applicable for the clearing of blockages in private house drains during all hours. The customer is requested to engage a private drainage contractor in the first instance if it is suspected that the blockage is located in the private property service.

- (a) After receiving the enquiry, a Water Operations crew will inspect the nature of the problem and the Council sewer, if required.
- (b) If it is suspected that the blockage is in the house drain, the property owner or agent will be offered the Council service, with advice of the Council's fee structure and the option to engage a private drainer.
- (c) The Council crew will carry out the works on the Council's system services only. Services other than blocked house drains, such as repairing broken pipes, cleaning

pipes etc should be charged separately, based on the Council’s current private works rates.

- (d) If Water Operations is requested to attend to the work, an authorisation form in triplicate is to be completed and signed by the property owner or agent. In the case of a rented property, no work will be carried out without approval from the property owner or his or her agent unless there is an urgent health risk. One copy of the authorisation form is to be handed to the property owner or agent and other copy of the authorisation form is to be sent to Finance section. A book copy of the invoice will be retained for future reference and follow up if necessary.
 - (e) Water Operations crew undertakes the work and the property owner or agent pays the fee within fourteen (14) days.
2. ***Preferred Council criteria on private drainage contractors to undertake works in the vicinity of the Council’s connection***
- (a) Where possible, the Council encourages private drainage contractors to obtain a copy of the drainage plan from the Council office, or from the property owner, before commencing the work.
 - (b) The contractor shall contact the Council as soon as it is suspected that the blockage is in the Council sewer, or within two (2) hours of commencing the work.
 - (c) Any excavation in the vicinity of the Council’s connection using heavy machinery should be carried out with caution, preferably with the Council’s approval.
 - (d) The contractor will use blockage clearing equipment to release a blockage in a property service, but at no time shall push the roots or objects causing the blockage into the Council’s sewer from the house drain intentionally, with a view to transferring the responsibility to the Council.
 - (e) The contractor shall submit an itemised invoice to the Council if a blockage is proved to be in the Council’s system and Council employees have subsequently cleared the blockage. The contractor should have sufficient evidence to prove that the blockage was in the Council’s system if the Council’s employees were not involved.
 - (f) All invoices for reimbursements shall be duly authorised by the property owners/agents and the property addresses and contact details should be provided with the invoices. Upon verification of the details by Council employees, payments will be made directly to the drainage contractors.
 - (g) All drainage contractors in the local area should be reminded of this policy at regular intervals by the Council.

Related policies/legislation/other documents:

DOC ID	DOCUMENT TYPE	DOCUMENT NAME
10398526	Internal	Register of Cost Recovery Fees and Schedule of Commercial and Other Charges