



Energy & Water
Ombudsman NSW

Sewer chokes



A sewer choke is a blockage in a wastewater pipe which can result in poor drainage, a spillage or overflow.

Typical causes of a sewer choke, include:

1. Tree roots invading and blocking the pipes
2. Objects that don't break down, blocking the pipes, such as wipes
3. Pouring liquid substances like fats, oils, paint and chemicals down the drain
4. Deterioration of old pipes.

Possible signs of a sewer choke:

- strange gurgling noises coming from drains and pipes
- slow draining sinks, baths or showers
- overflowing gully traps
- the toilet backing up and not draining.

What if I have a blockage?

If a blockage occurs, the property owner should contact a licensed plumber to assess the problem.

If the plumber identifies the blockage is in the water provider's sewer main, you or your plumber need to contact your water provider as soon as possible.

If the plumber identifies the problem is in the owner's pipes, the owner will have to pay.

Claims for damage

Sewage overflows can result in potentially high unanticipated costs for excavating, repairing the pipes and reinstating the excavated area.

Claims can be made for:

- damage to property
- personal inconvenience
- health and safety.

➤ Water providers will only pay a claim when they confirm the problem is in their sewer main.

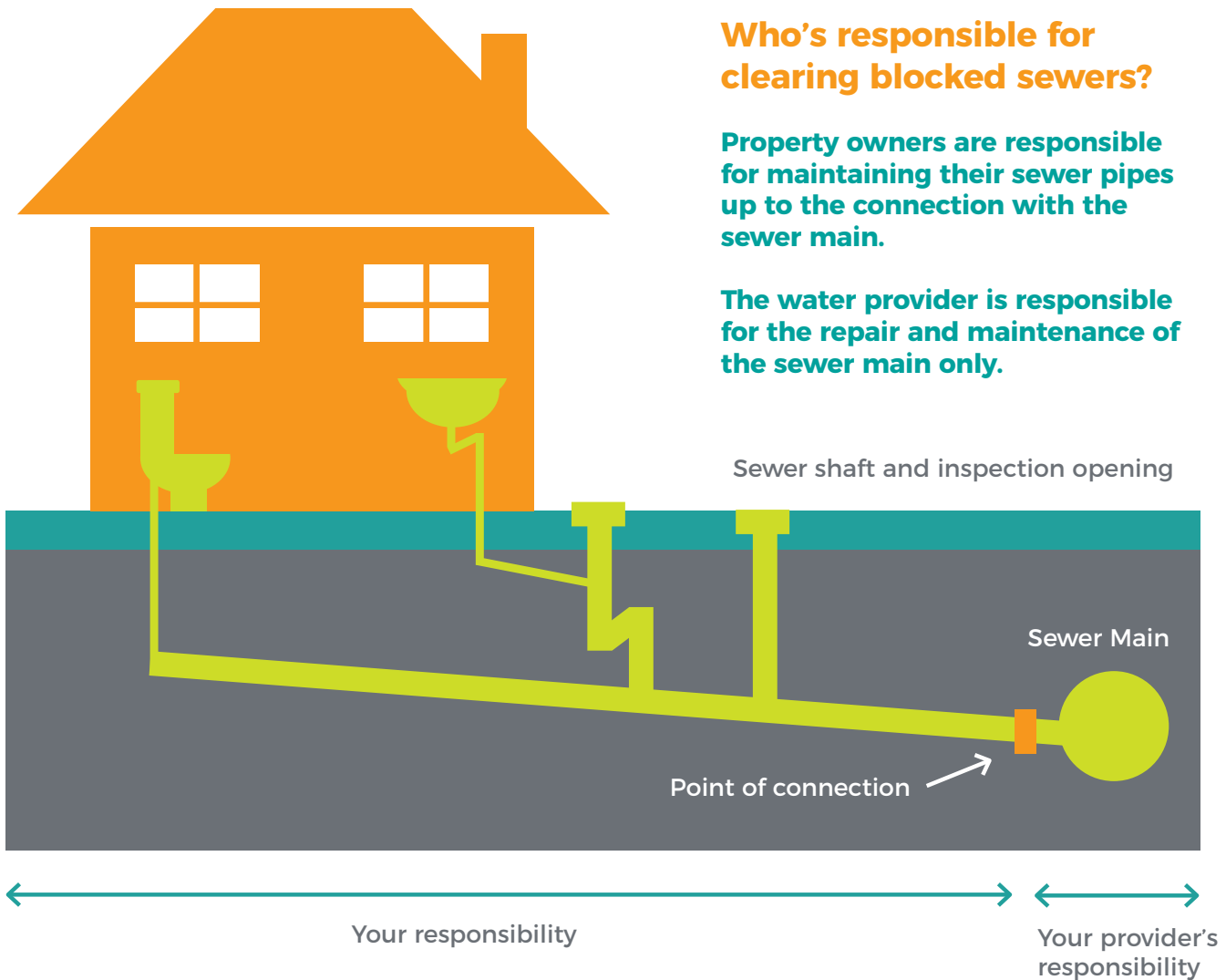
➤ If your plumber thinks the blockage is in the sewer main, make sure you or your plumber calls the water provider as soon as the cause of the blockage is identified.

Water providers may have different claims policies. Contact your water provider for details of their policy.

Who's responsible for clearing blocked sewers?

Property owners are responsible for maintaining their sewer pipes up to the connection with the sewer main.

The water provider is responsible for the repair and maintenance of the sewer main only.



In NSW water and sewerage services are supplied by different providers depending on where you live. Not all provider's in NSW are a member of EWON. Visit our website to see a list of members.

Most sewerage providers have a similar approach to responsibility for the repair and maintenance of the water and sewer lines servicing a customer's property. Hunter Water and Sydney Water deemed customer contracts specify who is responsible for what. You can review their contracts on their websites.

Problems can sometimes arise around who is responsible when a blockage appears to be in the junction between the customer's service and the sewer main. For clarification you should speak to your water provider.

Need more help?

If your water provider is a member of EWON, and you're not satisfied with the action they take to address your concerns, you can contact us for assistance. If they're not a member of EWON, contact us for advice.

Contact EWON

Freecall	1800 246 545 Mon - Fri, 9am - 5pm
Freefax	1800 812 291
Freepost	Reply Paid 86550 Sydney South NSW 1234
Interpreter	131 450
TTY/Voice	133 677
Email	complaints@ewon.com.au
Website	ewon.com.au

* If you are calling from a mobile phone, let us know and we will call you back.

ABN: 21 079 718 915