



# Media Release

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**For immediate release**

## **Wastewater plant gives view into what goes down the loo**

Hunter Water will open the doors of the region's largest wastewater treatment works to the community on Saturday, giving a rare insight into how wastewater is treated and what residents discard into the sewer system.

Darren Cleary, Hunter Water's Manager Treatment Delivery, hopes the visit will remind the community of the vital service provided by the wastewater transportation and treatment system, which is mostly located under the ground and often forgotten by residents who use it every day.

"Since the 1890s when the Hunter District Water Supply and Sewerage Board was established, Newcastle residents have become used to safe and reliable water and sewer services.

"The Burwood Beach Wastewater Treatment Works continues to support the high standard of living that Newcastle residents have come to expect, but this open day reminds us that everyone plays a part in keeping our system healthy," Mr Cleary said.

The screening house at Burwood Beach WWTW catches solid items as the wastewater enters the treatment process, and it shows exactly what goes down the drain that shouldn't.

The screening house catches all coarse material, including underwear, toys, cleansing wipes and food solids discarded into our sewer system, as well as many valuables lost by accident such as false teeth. Around two tonnes, or two cubic meters of items are caught and discarded on an average dry day, and this can increase dramatically during rain.

The remainder of the plant uses a biological process to treat the organic matter contained in the wastewater.

"Many people forget that sewerage services provide a simple but crucial function of taking away human waste, and these networks of pipes, pumping stations and treatment plants cost hundreds of thousands of dollars every year to maintain," Mr Cleary said.

The Burwood Beach WWTW treats approximately 48 million litres of wastewater every day. Wastewater arrives at the plant where it is screened and de-gritted before undergoing biological treatment. It then flows through clarifiers to separate biosolids from the clear effluent, before it is discharged 1.5 km out to sea under strict licence conditions.

The plant is currently undergoing a \$43 million upgrade to boost its performance and increase its capacity to cater for anticipated population growth in the area.

"While these works are underway, people can be confident that these beaches have very good quality water and are clean and safe," Mr Cleary said.

“Reliable Beachwatch data has shown for more than a decade that Burwood, Bar, Merewether and Dudley Beaches are among the cleanest in NSW.”

The plant services the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie local government areas, extending to Dudley in the south, Wallsend in the west and Mayfield in the north, representing a population of around 180,000. Located adjacent to the Glenrock State Conservation area, the plant is one of the region’s most well-known public facilities.

The current upgrade is one of 11 wastewater treatment works upgrades forming part of Hunter Water’s four year \$1 billion capital works program of new infrastructure projects including pipes, mains, pumps, reservoirs, treatments plants, sewers and water recycling facilities.

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