

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Now that you have received your Connection Information Pack, many people have questions about connecting to the Mooney Mooney Cheero Point Sewerage Scheme. To help answer these questions, we have developed a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) based on feedback received from the community.

### **1. Why have residents been asked to sign a Connection Agreement before total project costs are known?**

The purpose of the Connection Agreement is to notify Council of your intention to connect to the new sewerage scheme. In requesting property owners sign up to connect as soon as the new scheme is commissioned, Council was attempting to minimise scheme costs by encouraging as many property owners as possible to connect to the scheme while the contractor was still on site.

### **2. What are my options?**

It is estimated that a final scheme cost and final contribution charge will be known by the end of 2008. If you do not feel comfortable signing an agreement to connect prior to knowing the final cost of the scheme, you can wait until after the final scheme cost is known.

### **3. What happens if I don't connect?**

Mooney Mooney and Cheero Point has been identified as a Priority Sewerage Project (PSP) area by the NSW Government due to the public health and environmental risks posed by the existing septic systems in operation in the area.

Because of the high level of risk posed to the surrounding waterways, local oyster industry and public health & safety, the majority of property owners will be required to connect to the new system.

At the time connection becomes available; all existing systems will be required to comply with regulatory standards to continue to operate. Council will withdraw all existing 'approvals to operate' for on site sewage management systems that don't meet regulatory standards once connection to the new scheme is available.

If your existing system does not comply with regulatory standards, you will be required to connect to the new sewerage scheme immediately.

#### **4. What do I pay if I don't connect?**

If you continue to operate an existing system that meets regulatory standards, you will be required to pay the Annual Residential Sewerage Service Charge of \$399.40 per annum only. Property owners of vacant land within the serviced area will be required to pay an Annual Residential Sewerage Service Charge of \$299.55 per annum only. These are the regulated charges for the period 1 July 2008 - June 30 2009. This charge is the same rate across the Gosford Local Government Area (LGA) rate base and reflects the availability of the services available to property owners.

The Contribution Charge for connection to the sewerage scheme is only payable once you connect to the scheme in accordance with the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) Determination for Backlog Sewerage Services.

#### **5. What is the cost to connect at a later date?**

The Contribution Charge will be indexed annually by CPI for each year (or part of a year) that a property remains unconnected to the Sewerage System after the system becomes available.

#### **6. When will connection to the sewerage system be available?**

It is estimated that connection to the sewerage scheme will be available in the first quarter of 2009.

#### **7. How are costs for the scheme shared across the Gosford Local Government Area (LGA)?**

When determining the cost structure for the Mooney Mooney & Cheero Point sewerage scheme, the Independent Pricing And Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) took into consideration the benefits to those directly serviced by the scheme in relation to the advantages to the broader community.

As a result, it was determined that after subsidies were deducted, property owners serviced by the scheme would pay the initial fixed contribution charge of \$5400 indexed to CPI and 67% of the remaining scheme costs.

The other 33% of remaining scheme costs are to be spread over the Gosford LGA rate base.

This Determination applies to all other Priority Sewerage Projects (PSP)'s identified in the Gosford LGA.

For more information please go to: [www.ipart.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au)

## **8. Will sharing a connection line with my neighbours reduce the cost of connecting?**

All property owners will be charged the same contribution charge for connecting to the scheme, regardless of whether they are sharing equipment with their neighbours.

## **9. Who is responsible for maintenance of the scheme once it is commissioned?**

Council and Council's contractor are responsible for installing sewerage scheme equipment on your property and laying pipes from this equipment to the boundary kit to connect individual properties to the scheme main.

Property owners are responsible for the internal drainage pipes to connect the equipment that has been installed to your internal plumbing. This work must be carried out by a licensed plumber.

Gosford Council is responsible for maintenance of all low pressure system equipment, pipes from the on-property equipment to the boundary kit and all street mains once the new sewerage system is commissioned. Maintenance costs for the scheme are recovered from the Annual Residential Sewerage Service Charge across the Gosford LGA rate base.

Property Owners are responsible for maintenance of the pipes connecting their internal plumbing to the low pressure equipment on their property.

## **10. If my property is damaged as a result of the system, who has to pay?**

Council is responsible for payment to rectify property damage incurred by the system.

## **11. If I'm sharing a common pipe with my neighbours and it becomes blocked, who is responsible to fix the problem?**

Some property owners may be sharing a common pipeline with their neighbours from the low-pressure system equipment installed on their property to the boundary kit.

Once the scheme is commissioned, Council is responsible for the ongoing maintenance and repairs to all system equipment, pipes (apart from internal drainage connection) and mains. In the event of a blocked pipe, Council is responsible for rectifying the problem at no cost to the property owner.

## **12. My property is only used as a holiday house. Do I have to connect?**

At the time connection becomes available, all properties that do not meet regulatory standards to operate an existing on-site sewerage management system will be required to connect to the new scheme, regardless of frequency of use.

### **13. What if I have trouble paying for connection to the new scheme?**

Council currently has an existing Hardship Relief Provision where eligible pensioners can claim rebate on their Council rates. Council intends to amend this Provision to include cases where property owners are unable to pay to connect to the scheme due to extreme hardship.

In these cases, Council will allow for the cost of the Contribution Charge to accrue against the value of your property. These costs would then accrue with interest and be automatically repaid at the time of the sale of your property.

It is estimated that the amended Hardship Provision will be formally adopted by Gosford Council by the end of 2008. This would be prior to connection to the scheme becoming available in the first quarter of 2009.

Pensioners and others who are determined to meet eligibility requirements will be able to access this Hardship Provision.