



**MOUNT BARKER**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## Improved Trade Waste Policy to deliver cost and environmental benefits for Mount Barker district

**An improved approach to managing waste from businesses across the Mount Barker district is expected to deliver both environmental and cost benefits for the local community.**

The Mount Barker District Council has strengthened its *Trade Waste Policy* – with the updated policy endorsed by Council at a meeting this week and set to come into effect on 1 July 2021. Council will now work with the local business sector to improve onsite pre-treatment and reduce non-compliant trade waste discharges into its waste water network.

The changes follows a 2018 investigation, which found some local businesses were discharging high-strength pollutants into Council's sewerage network, adversely impacting the performance of the Mount Barker Waste Water Treatment Plant. Trade waste discharges recorded in late 2020 are also believed to have caused a significant spike in ammonia levels in recycled water by killing off beneficial bacteria used in the waste water treatment process.

Under the *Water Industry Act 2012*, businesses cannot discharge materials into sewerage infrastructure if it is likely to damage that infrastructure. Penalties of up to \$25,000 can apply.

Council is taking a proactive approach to address the problem over the next 12 months, launching a new education campaign and encouraging business owners to collaborate with Council to increase their compliance. It will give businesses time to seek the necessary approvals for their discharges, and install any onsite pre-treatment equipment required to meet their responsibilities under the *Water Industry Act 2012*.

Businesses which continue to discharge non-compliant trade waste will face higher discharge fees to cover the higher costs associated with treating the waste and – in extreme cases – could have their access to Council's waste water network cut off.

Mount Barker Mayor Ann Ferguson says the increased focus on compliance and collaboration will assist to reduce the risk of damage to Council's waste water infrastructure, improve safety for staff and the public, and enhance environmental outcomes.

“Our waste water treatment network is a critical part of our operations as a Council and, as our region continues to grow, so too does the added pressure on this system,” Mayor Ferguson says.

“Under legislation, businesses must pre-treat their trade waste water onsite to remove harmful substances such as chemicals, fats and oils, heavy metals and high nutrient levels – but many currently aren't doing this.



## MOUNT BARKER DISTRICT COUNCIL

“Council is investing considerably in upgrading and expanding its waste water infrastructure, but non-compliant and poorly-managed trade waste discharges pose a real threat. They damage the sewerage network and our waste water treatment plants – shortening the life of our essential infrastructure and costing thousands in repairs and additional treatments.

“Trade waste is also damaging our environment. Our waste water treatment plants are designed to treat household waste, not industrial waste. High levels of nutrients, ammonia, chemicals and heavy metals can’t be removed during treatment – and risk being discharged into our fragile ecosystems including the Laratinga Wetlands and Mount Barker Creek.”

The updated *Trade Waste Policy* and the accompanying *Trade Waste Management Plan* set out Council’s approach to managing business waste through the sewer network.

Under the approach, businesses that do not comply with their trade waste discharge responsibilities face a five-step compliance process, starting with the issuing of non-compliance notices following discharge breaches and follow-up site visits. If the breaches are ongoing, Council has the option to terminate or suspend its discharge agreement. Where the non-compliance continues, Council may issue a fine and/or prosecution, or, in extreme cases, forcibly disconnect a business or organisation from Council’s sewerage network.

A new set of fees and charges will be introduced to target businesses that fail to service their onsite waste infrastructure such as grease traps and settling pits, as well as for those that do not have pre-treatment infrastructure installed or fail to keep it maintained or repaired. Businesses that discharge over their approved trade waste volumes, or discharge poorer quality waste than they have approval to release, will also face penalties.

Mount Barker District Council’s General Manager of Infrastructure Phil Burton said Council’s strengthened policy seeks to ensure businesses do what is required to protect the public, the environment and the district’s essential sewerage infrastructure from harm.

“We are not asking anything additional of businesses – only that they take responsibility for managing their trade waste as per the relevant legislation,” Mr Burton says.

“There is an issue with some business owners not doing the right thing – just over the past two months alone, our staff visited 20 businesses to inspect their grease traps and only one complied.

“Thankfully, we have some great business operators in our district who are already meeting their requirements with trade waste. We understand that part of the issue is education, so we will work with those businesses that need assistance to help them become compliant over coming months. “

“Our new policy has two main priorities – to encourage businesses not already appropriately treating their waste to install pre-treatment devices to remove some of these harmful components prior to waste discharge, and to ensure costs are appropriately recovered for the treatment of trade waste where businesses continue to be non-compliant. ”



**MOUNT BARKER  
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

“We believe that as this policy is enacted, we’ll see significant improvements in the quality of waste entering our waste water treatment network, which will certainly help keep our waste water treatment plants operating effectively, and reduce the risks to the environment and our community.”

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Mt Barker District Council Community Connections Manager Ian Hildebrand

P: (08) 8391 7200 | E: [ihildebrand@mountbarker.sa.gov.au](mailto:ihildebrand@mountbarker.sa.gov.au)

**Additional Trade Waste key facts:**

- Council’s first *Trade Waste Policy* was adopted in 2003, then updated in 2014 following the introduction of the *Water Industry Act 2012*.
- The latest review was instigated after the Mount Barker Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) received trade waste from unknown sources and of unknown quality levels which impacted its effective operation.
- There are currently 280 premises in the Council area with a trade waste authorisation to discharge into Council’s sewerage network – however, Council believes there are other non-compliant businesses operating without the required authorisation.
- Trade waste discharges account for an estimated 5-10% of inflow to the Mount Barker WWTP, although this is difficult to quantify as not all businesses are compliant with approval to discharge.
- Council staff have already been actively working with a number of local businesses to increase their compliance with the existing Trade Waste Policy requirements and this work will continue.