Welcome to the Mt Martha Sewage Treatment Plant! Our plant is one of eight in the South East Water service area that allows the water that we use everyday to be recycled or safely released back into the environment.

1. Quick facts

- Mt Martha Sewage Treatment Plant opened in 1978 and serves the townships of Mornington, Mt Eliza, Somerville, Pearcedale, Baxter and Mt Martha.
- Every day 13 million litres of sewage is treated at the plant.
- The sewage that arrives at the plant is 99.97 per cent water.

2. Mt Martha Sewage Treatment Plant

Did you know that just over 120 years ago, Melbourne was sometimes referred to as “Marvelous Smellbourne”? Back then, sewage from buildings was disposed of in open gutters, flowing into rivers and creeks.

The open sewers created an awful smell, but more importantly they were a health and environmental hazard due to the harmful bacteria living in the sewage. As the population grew, it became obvious that the community needed a safer way to dispose of their waste, and so eventually thunderboxes were created.

Thunderboxes (also known as pan closet toilets) were small cubicles outside of homes with buckets or pans for people to do their business. A nightman came around each week to empty and replace the pan. This sewage was then gathered up, dried and used as fertiliser.

In 1889 English engineer James Mansergh created plans for Melbourne’s first ever sewerage system. The start of construction on the sewerage system in 1892 was literally a breath of fresh air for the people of Melbourne. The first treatment plant was situated in Werribee and the first homes were connected to the sewerage system in 1897. Since then more treatment plants have been built to cater for our growing population, including the one at Mt Martha!
4. Did you know?

- There are approximately 623,800 properties connected to South East Water’s sewerage system.
- The S-bend pipes that are connected to toilets are designed to stop smelly gases from coming back up into your house.
- Thunderboxes were named due to the noise the horse and cart made when coming down the cobblestones in the back lanes. The last three of these in Victoria were removed from Frankston in 1991.
- It is said that the average person spends about 380 days of their life on the toilet. That’s a lot of time reading newspapers!
- The average person uses 20,805 sheets of toilet paper a year!
- Approximately 2.6 billion people in the world don’t have access to safe and sanitary toilet facilities.

5. Sewerage verus sewage?

What’s the difference between sewerage and sewage?

Sewerage is used to describe the facilities that transport sewage from your home. Sewage is the waste and water from your toilets and drains.

6. The sewage journey

Most people don’t stop to think where the water goes once they have pulled the plug from a bath or flushed the toilet. The water that we let out of the bath, sink or shower, along with the water that is flushed down the toilet, is called sewage. The majority of homes in the Melbourne’s south east are connected to a reticulated sewerage system that consists of a network of pipes and pumping stations that carry sewage to a sewage treatment plant.

How the system works

Our sewerage system has three main components:

1. Property connections
2. Collection and transfer system
3. Treatment plants

**Property connections** – These are individual pipes to properties that carry sewage from each property to the collection system’s reticulation sewers. They are usually made from UPVC plastic, iron or clay.

**Collection and transfer system** – These are the network of underground pipes and pumping stations that carry sewage to a treatment plant. Pumping stations are needed to pump the sewage up hill to a high point where gravity takes over and sewage flows to a treatment plant.

**Treatment plants** – Sewage treatment plants remove solids from the sewage and treat the remaining sewage to make it safe for reuse or release to the environment. Our treatment plants also deal with waste from commercial and industrial properties. The waste from homes is called domestic waste, the waste from industry is called trade waste. In most cases, trade waste needs to have some pre-treatment before it reaches the collection system.

7. More information

More information about South East Water and our sewerage network can be found at southeastwater.com.au

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