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Hunter community is the power behind the throne

Hunter Water has thanked the Lower Hunter community for respecting the throne after winning the Communications for Impact Award in this year's NSW Sustainability Awards.

The 'Respect the Throne' campaign came about in response to the COVID-19 pandemic's toilet paper shortage, which saw an excess of non-degradable items being flushed, creating more blockages in pipes and pump stations.

With a quick operational solution unavailable, Hunter Water delivered a message to the community through a catchy jingle played on television and social media to drive awareness and changes in flushing behaviour.

Hunter Water Group Manager Operations, Glen Robinson, said the award was a big win for the organisation in more ways than one.

"We are happy to report that 93 per cent of our customers now understand that they can only flush the three Ps: poo, pee and (toilet) paper. I want to give a big thanks to our customers and community for listening to our message and being quick to adapt their behaviour.

"Since launching the campaign, we have seen a reduction in overflows attributed to blockages and fewer blockages in our network systems, which has reduced our reactive maintenance costs.

"To capitalise on this success, we have released a sequel to the campaign, introducing another important message to help us continue to change flushing behaviour in our community and minimise fatbergs, the large masses of congealed fat and solid waste that form in the sewerage system.

"The message is simple: Fats and oils don't mix with wipes and tissues. It's vital to remember that anything you put down the drain or kitchen sink will end up in the same place as items flushed down the toilet," said Mr Robinson.

While there has been a reduction in blockages in the system thanks to the campaign, fatbergs remain an issue.

"At Morpeth Wastewater Treatment Works, for example, we typically capture a build-up of about four tonnes of non-degradable items each month through the screening system at our inlet works.

"We're keen to reduce the impact of fatbergs on our system. Our community can help by being mindful of what they flush down the toilet and put down the sink," said Mr Robinson.

For some simple things you can do inside and outside your home to prevent sewer problems occurring, visit www.hunterwater.com.au/respect

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