

**FRIDAY, 28 FEB 2020**

## **FATBERGS LURKING IN MELBOURNE HOMES, RACV WARNS**

RACV's Emergency Home Assist (EHA) plumbers have discovered a disgusting secret lurking in Melbourne's suburban sewer networks – fatbergs.

Fatbergs are large masses of congealed fat, litter and anything else that is flushed down the toilet or makes its way into the sewers.

General Manager of RACV's Home division, Darren Turner said the most common cause of fatbergs was the humble wet wipe.

"Our EHA plumbers often report wet wipes as being the root cause of fatbergs, or blockages," Mr Turner said.

"Many people flush wet wipes down the toilet, even though they are not designed to be flushed, including those marketed as 'biodegradable' or 'flushable'."

Mr Turner said an estimated 14 tonnes\* of wet wipes are removed from Melbourne's sewers every week.

"Most wet wipes, including baby wipes, make-up removers, cleaning wipes and toilet wipes, contain plastic and don't disintegrate in water, like toilet paper," he said.

"The wet wipes get stuck inside pipes, causing fatbergs to form. That means that homeowners could be hit with plumbing bills of thousands of dollars to clear and repair pipes blocked by wet wipes.

Fatbergs and blockages are estimated to cost the Australian water industry more than \$15 million a year in repair costs.\*

Mr Turner urged homeowners to save themselves the inconvenience and expense of blocked pipes by not flushing any foreign objects down the toilet.

"It's simple – if you have to use wet wipes, simply pop them in the household rubbish bin, otherwise you could end up with an unwanted fatberg in your household plumbing."

To avoid fatbergs or blockages, RACV suggest homeowners:

- Do not flush foreign objects, except toilet paper, down the toilet.
- Wet wipes, make-up and sanitary products and nappies belong in the rubbish – even ones that say they are advertised as 'biodegradable'.
- Oils, fats and food scraps go in the bin, not down the sink.

The biggest recorded 'fatberg,' weighing 130 tonnes and stretching 250 metres, was found in the sewers of London in 2013.

\*<https://www.yvw.com.au/about-us/news-room/tip-fatberg-fatberg-exhibit-illustrates-melbournes-bigger-wet-wipe-obsession>

**##ENDS##**

For all media requests, contact the Media & Communications team on **0417 041 398** or [media@racv.com.au](mailto:media@racv.com.au).

## **About RACV**

*Founded in 1903, RACV exists to improve the lives of Victorians by delivering valued benefits to members and their communities. RACV addresses the needs of Victorians by informing, advising and representing them through products and services spanning motoring, mobility, leisure, travel, insurance and the home. RACV seeks to help shape a smarter, safer and more connected future for Victoria.*