

# FISH HOEK VALLEY RATEPAYERS & RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

*(Incorporating Fish Hoek, Clovelly and Sun Valley)*

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**TO: CHAIR: SUB-COUNCIL 19**

**SUBJECT: SEWAGE SPILL INTO THE SILVERMINE ESTUARY**

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## 1. DISCUSSION

The Fish Hoek Valley Ratepayers and Residents Association (FHVRRRA) thanks the efforts of the following people that were instrumental in the early reporting of this tragic event:

- Lewis Walter
- Steve Porrett
- Helen O'Regan
- Terry and Evanne Rothwell
- Kim Kruyshaar

On Monday, 10 December 2018 at about 19:10, a sewage spill was reported and logged at the City's Emergency number 086 010 3089, reference 9106317514. The Silvermine Estuary quickly became heavily polluted above the Fish Hoek / Clovelly bridge. Sewage was still flowing into the estuary after 09:30 on 11 December from the culvert on the Fish Hoek side. As the estuary was not open to the sea at that time, a great many baby fish, mostly haarders / red-lip mullet (*Liza haematocheilus*), were killed. Warning signs were erected by 10:30 on 12 December. A bulldozer opened the mouth of the estuary about midday on 12 December. On 13 December about 14:30 a honey-sucker was seen at the Disa Avenue/ First Crescent roundabout, which appeared to be clearing a blockage. On 14 December a honey sucker positioned on the bridge, vacuumed the remaining spill and dead fish.





Photos supplied by the same people mentioned above.

Blue flag beaches need to be prioritised for protection especially during the summer swimming season. This has to be part of the commitment for upholding the Blue Flag status.

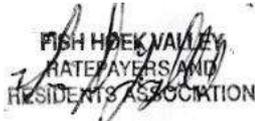
The sewer pump design needs to be revisited. Currently, when sewer pumps break down, at an ever increasing rate lately, the sewage is dumped (or overflows) into the closest storm-water drain. Fish Hoek has four main storm-water culverts that lead into our bay. Two dump into the Silvermine estuary and the other two main culverts discharge directly onto the Fish Hoek Beach with one consistently showing raw sewage counts. There are other much smaller storm-water drains that flow into our bay, but near the rocks on either side. Sewage holding tanks would probably run out of capacity quickly due to the volume. However, even septic tanks have leach fields. These fields remove contaminants and impurities from the liquid that emerge, typically via two processes. The one process is anaerobic digestion of the organic materials which is catabolised by a microbial system. The other system is bacteriophage, a virus that infects and replicates within bacteria, and is often seen when constantly fed with the same bacteria source, such as *E. coli* and *Enterococci*, which are found in mammalian intestinal tracts (sewage). A leach field is essentially a bio-filter. They are typically just perforated pipes and porous material, such as gravel and sand. They are mini-sewage farms. It is our request that this design be investigated.

## 2. QUESTIONS

We are deeply concerned about the lack of early response by the City, which has raised many related questions. We humbly request that Sub-Council 19 provides the answers to the following questions and preferably by the City officials with appropriate authority to respond and mitigate future similar events:

- Did the automatic warning signal (City's telemetry or alternative warning system) transmit a fault to the City?
- If the signal was not transmitted, why not and when will this be repaired?
- If so, at what time did this occur?
- Why was no action taken promptly?
- When did the City stop the spill of sewerage / effluent into the estuary?
- Was the contaminated water treated to neutralize the bacteria before being released into the sea?
- What measures is the City putting in place to make sure a spill like this does not happen again?

We look forward to measures being put in place to stop a recurrence.

<b>NAME &amp; SURNAME</b>	<i>Brian Youngblood, Chair: Fish Hoek Valley Residents and Ratepayers Association (FHVRRA)</i>
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<b>DATE</b>	17 December 2018