



Trish Doyle MP
Member for Blue Mountains

Blue Mountains Septic Pump Out

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I speak on behalf of Blue Mountains residents who have been mistreated by the former O'Farrell Government and who are still left in a state of uncertainty by the Baird Government. In 2012 the O'Farrell Government cut the sewage pump out subsidy to the remaining 72 residents in the Blue Mountains whose homes were not connected to the sewer. That decision was made high-handedly without consultation and communication with the people affected and it went against a written commitment by another Liberal Government.

In the early 1990s the Liberal Greiner Government made a long-term commitment to connect those homes to the sewer and promised that until that occurred those homes would continue to receive a pump out subsidy. I have spent the past three years fighting on behalf of the residents whose pump out subsidies were cut by this Government. I have fought for residents because access to reliable, safe and affordable water and sanitation infrastructure is a human right, and because of the extraordinary risk that will occur to our unique World Heritage-listed natural environment if pump outs of domestic septic systems are not carried out on time or in a proper manner. Despite the Baird Government agreeing to match Labor's election promise to restore the pump out subsidy residents still have concerns about this Government's ability to deliver an effective solution. The residents need the security of an affordable, long-term and permanent solution. At a residents' action meeting last Sunday, the following action points were agreed to:

1. That the residents maintain the position that the NSW Government and Sydney Water should honour their original written commitment and connect the remaining 72 households to mains sewerage infrastructure in the same manner in which this service has been afforded to other Blue Mountains residents. This is the only reasonable long-term and permanent solution in the provision of this essential service and which adequately protects the environment.

2. That the septic pump subsidy and service remain in place and linked to the title of the relevant and respective properties, at least until:
 - a. Residents have been connected to main sewerage infrastructure; or
 - b. Residents have installed an affordable and approved onsite wastewater management system.

3. That the septic pump out subsidy be administered by the same arrangements that were in place up to 30 June 2014, that is:
 - a. That the subsidy is paid directly to the service contractor;
 - b. That residents are billed on a quarterly basis by Sydney Water for what they owe for the service;
 - c. That the quarterly charge residents pay is a sewerage fee equivalent to the average sewerage charge for the greater Sydney Water customer base;
 - d. That annual increases are consistent with increases in the sewerage service charge of other Sydney Water customers; and
 - e. That the provision of the pump out service be scheduled to occur automatically as a matter of routine and on a fortnightly basis.

I will work with Government and lobby and negotiate with the Minister for the Environment on behalf of these residents to ensure that the remaining 72 impacted families are connected to the sewer or have an onsite system that is environmentally sound. I will not give up until that is done. I pay tribute to the work of Craig Sinclair from the Blue Mountains and the residents' action group, which has worked solidly with me over the past few years on this not very pretty issue.