





Murrumbidgee
COUNCIL

On Site Sewage Management Policy

	Name	Position	Signature	Date
Responsible Officer	Garry Stoll	Director - Planning, Community & Development		28 June 2023
Authorised By	John Scarce	General Manger		28 June 2023

Document Revision History	
Date adopted by Council	27 June 2023
Minute Number:	99/06/23
Revision Number:	
Review Date:	See item 14 of this Policy
Date Adopted by Council:	
Minute No:	
Next Review Date:	
Revision Number:	
Review Date:	
Date Adopted by Council:	
Minute No:	

June 2023

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1. Introduction

Effective management of domestic sewage and wastewater is an important consideration for the public health of Murrumbidgee Council residents and the environment in which they reside. It requires the active involvement of both the Council and landholders.

This policy has been developed to guide Murrumbidgee Council to assess, regulate and manage the selection, design, installation, operation and maintenance of new and existing on-site sewage management systems.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the On-Site Sewage Management Policy is to:

- Guide landholders towards sustainable on-site management of domestic sewage and waste water;
- Protect and enhance public health and the environment within the Murrumbidgee Council Local Government Area;
- To enable efficient regulation and monitoring of on-site sewage management systems;
- To maintain compliance referring to Legislation and Regulation in NSW.

3. Objectives/Goals

The objectives and goals of this On-Site Sewage Management Policy are:

- **Prevention of public health risk** - sewage contains bacteria, viruses, parasites and other disease-causing organisms. Contact with effluent increases the risk to public health;
- **Protection of the environment** - on-site sewage management systems (OSSMS) should be selected, situated, designed, constructed, operated and maintained to ensure land, groundwater or surface water is not contaminated;
- **Ecologically sustainable development** - on-site sewage management systems must be installed and operated in such a manner that will allow the system to operate satisfactorily on a long term basis, whilst maintaining acceptable environmental and public health standards;
- Create and maintain an up to date register and records of OSSMS in the Murrumbidgee Council area;
- Assess the installation of new OSSMS to ensure they are fit for purpose and represent best practice;
- Implement an approvals program for OSSMS;
- Implement a risk based inspection program of OSSMS;
- Raise awareness of property owners of OSSMS about management and maintenance requirements;
- Utilise information and mapping systems to monitor the cumulative impacts of OSSMS in the Murrumbidgee Council area;
- Work with service agents and property owners to improve monitoring and reporting;

- Provide community education to landholders for safe and efficient operation of their OSSMS.

4. Definitions

Table 1. Definitions

Septic Tank	Wastewater treatment device that provides a preliminary treatment of wastewater comprising sediments of solids, fats and oils and anaerobic digestion of sludge.
Absorption Trench	A trench located below ground level designed to transpire and absorb effluent discharged from the septic tank. This trench must be installed correctly to avoid pollution of ground water.
AWTS	Aerated Water Treatment System is a wastewater treatment process, typically consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary settling of solids and flotation of scum • Secondary oxidation and consumption of organic matter through aeration; • Clarification by additional settling of solids; • Disinfection of wastewater before surface irrigation; • Mechanical operation of air pumps and pressure pumps which must be serviced quarterly.
De-sludging	Withdrawing sludge, scum and liquid from a tank by a qualified service agent licensed to transport and dispose of liquid human waste.
Effluent	Wastewater discharging from a sewage management facility.
Land Application Area	The area of which the treated wastewater is distributed.
Nutrients	Chemical elements that are essential for sustained plant or animal growth, these being nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. Excess nitrogen and phosphorus are potentially serious pollutants.
Pathogens	Micro-organisms potentially cause disease including bacteria, protozoa and viruses.
Potable	Water of a quality suitable for human consumption.
Run off	Effluent that becomes surface flow that is not absorbed into the soil.
Scum	Material collected at the top of the primary wastewater treatment tank. This includes oils, grease, soaps.
Sludge	Organic matter produced by the wastewater treatment process.
Community Facility	Refers to a facility used for community events, sporting events and gatherings.

Environmentally Sensitive Area	Land identified in an environmental planning instrument or mapping as being in an area identified as ground water vulnerable or high biodiversity significance.
Flood zone	Land identified as flood prone in the Flood Plain Risk Management Study and Plan.
Intermittent Watercourse	Means any creek, gully, stream or chain of ponds, whether artificially modified or not, in which water flows periodically and sporadically.
Permanent Watercourse	Means any river, creek, stream or chain of ponds, whether artificially modified or not, in which water flows continuously.

5. Implementation Program

Council's regulatory program to meet the stated objectives/goals will include all fixed on-site sewage management facilities including public, industrial and commercial systems, which do not discharge directly to a public sewer or are not licensed by NSW Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This program will be used to assess, regulate and manage the design, installation, operation and maintenance of OSSMS.

For the purpose of this policy, an OSSMS includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Septic tanks with evapotranspiration beds or absorption trenches;
- Aerated wastewater treatment systems (AWTS);
- Wet composting toilet with sand filter and/or wetland/reed bed with sub-surface application system;
- Waterless composting toilet and grey water treatment system;
- Grey water treatment systems;
- Septic tank with sand filter and/or constructed wetland/reed bed with sub-surface application system;
- Septic tank and amended soil mound system;
- Septic tank and pump-out well;
- Commercial or package plant systems;
- Any other system that stores, treats and/or disposes of sewage and/or wastewater on-site.

6. When is an Application to Council Required

An application under Section 68 of the *Local Government Act 1993* must be made to Council for the installation, construction or alteration, or use of an on-site sewage management system.

6.1 Approval to Operate

An approval to operate an on-site sewage management system will be issued to the owner of the property where:

Table 2. Summary of Approval Process

Type of Activity	Approval to Install/Construct/Alter	Approval to Operate
New OSSMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of OSSMS submitted as part of a development application; or • Application to Install, Construct or Alter to be submitted to Council (where Exempt or Complying Development). 	Issued after final inspection by Council if works carried out.
Upgrade or alterations to exiting OSSMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of OSSMS submitted as part of a Development Application; or • Application to Install, Construct or Alter to be submitted to Council (where Exempt or Complying Development). 	Issued after final inspection by Council if works carried out.
Existing OSSMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not Applicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application to be lodged (by new owner) within 2 months of sale; • Applications to be lodged following initial inspection and risk rating.

6.2 Commercial Systems

On-site sewage management system (OSSMS) with the capacity above 10 equivalent population (EP) and less than 2,500 EP, are classed as commercial systems. They are commonly known as '*package wastewater treatment plants*' and are used for caravan parks, B&B's, hotels, motels, and small villages located in areas with no reticulated sewage system.

Commercial Systems will be required to:

- Obtain approval to install, construct or alter;
- Hold approval to operate;
- Are designed to meet the performance criteria outlined in Section 10 and satisfy Council that they can adequately treat and dispose of the wastewater on-site without creating environmental or public health risks;
- Be classified as '**high risk**' system and undergo a higher inspection frequency.

Where irrigation of treated effluent is proposed, the design and installation will need to take into consideration the NSW EPA's Guideline "Use of Effluent by Irrigation".

Systems that have an intended processing capacity of more than 2,500 EP or 750 kilolitres per day and involve the discharge or likely discharge of wastes or by-products to land or waters require a licence with NSW EPA.

7. Application Requirements for an On-Site Sewage Management System

When submitting an application to Council for a new on-site sewerage management system (OSSMS), or an alteration of an existing system, the following documentation is required:

- Completed Murrumbidgee Council OSSMS application form;
- Payment of fee;
- Plan of septic tank/s, collection well or aerated wastewater treatment tank/s;
- Geotechnical assessment report;
- Certification that the proposed system is approved by NSW Health;
- Site plan indicating the location of the OSSMS and land application area. The site plan must show the location and distance of the OSSMS and land application area indicating:-
 - a. Distance to all neighboring boundaries, permanent and intermittent watercourses, waterbodies and domestic groundwater bores and wells;
 - b. Distance from dwellings and outbuildings (including pools and domestic water tanks and bores), and;
 - c. Any landscaping design required for surface irrigation field.

8. Geotechnical Reports

To further demonstrate satisfactory effluent disposal, a geotechnical report will be required:

- a. If the property is constrained through soil type, proximity to a watercourse or waterbody or high ground water level;
- b. For all properties less than 10,000m²;
- c. Land identified as an Environmentally Sensitive Area.

9. Risk Assessment

Council has adopted a system of risk assessment; the level of risk will determine the frequency of inspection (table 3). When assessing the level of risk, the Council Officer will utilise the stated risk assessment criteria together with information provided by the householder on their application, planning documents and information from relevant authorities.

9.1 Risk Criterion

High Risk – Systems located:-

- Within 2km upstream of a town water intake point, or;
- Any other location at the discretion of Council.

Medium Risk – Systems located:-

- On a lot/s that is within single ownership of less than 10,000 square meters that is connected to reticulated water;
- On a lot/s that is within single ownership of less than 2,000 square meters that is not connected to reticulated water;
- Within an environmentally sensitive area;
- Connected to a community facility;
- Within an on-site sewage management system located within 100m - 300m from a permanent watercourse.

Low Risk – All other systems that are not included as high or medium risk.

Table 3. Risk Criteria for Classification of OSSM

Criteria	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk
Distance From:			
Environmentally sensitive areas (habitat, wetlands, aquatic reserves, wilderness reserves)	>100m	Between 40 - 100m	<40m
Permanent water (river, creek, stream, damn)	>300m	Between 100 - 300m	<100m
Temporary waterway (intermittent gully or creek)	>100m	Between 40 - 100m	<40m
Domestic Bore	Nil or >500m	Between 250 - 500m	250m
Closest neighbouring property boundary to effluent disposal area	>50m	Between 15 - 50m	<15m
Closest dwelling (on neighbouring property)	>15m	Between 6 - 15m	<6m
Flood liable	NO	NO	YES
Meets performance standards/ no ongoing problems	YES	YES	NO
Effluent ponding on ground surface / wet soggy disposal area	NO	NO	Yes
Grazing and other activities restricted in effluent disposal area	YES	YES	NO
Condition of Tank/Infrastructure	GOOD	GOOD	POOR

10. Performance Standards

In protecting public health and the environment, section 44 of the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* specifies that an OSSMS must be operated in accordance with the following performance standards:

- The prevention of the spread of disease micro-organisms;
- The prevention of the spread of foul odors;
- The prevention of the contamination of water;
- The prevention of the degradation of soil and vegetation;
- The discouragement of insects and vermin;
- Ensuring that persons do not come in contact with untreated sewage or effluent (treated or untreated) in their ordinary activities on the premises concerned;
- The minimisation of any adverse impacts on the amenity of the premises and surrounding lands.

All systems of sewage management must be operated in a manner that achieves the above performance standards. Council staff will use these performance standards to assess the level of compliance of OSSMS. Where a system does not meet the performance standards, it will be deemed to be a failed system and rectification works/upgrades will be required to address the issues identified. All OSSMS must be operated in accordance with the unit operating specifications and procedures provided by the manufacturer.

11. Inspection Frequency

The risk assessment determines the frequency of inspection. Council will undertake a minimum of 10 inspections per year. Council will focus on highly populated areas and areas close to environmentally sensitive areas.

Table 4. Inspection Frequency

Risk Rating	Frequency of Inspections	Approval to Operate Expiry
High Risk	Systems to be inspected yearly	2 years after issue
Medium Risk	Systems to be inspected every 5 years	5 years after issue
Low Risk	Systems to be inspected on the receipt of a complaint, when a development application for the site is received or by a random audit as set out in the monitoring program	10 years after issue

Aerated Wastewater Treatment Systems (AWTS) will be inspected by Council according to the level of risk assigned as above. The AWTS must be inspected and serviced by a waste water contractor according to the manufacturer's instructions on a quarterly basis (4 times per year). This service report provided by the contractor is to be forwarded to Council for reporting and monitoring purposes.

Prior to Council inspections, Council will notify property owners in writing, giving a minimum of 14 days' notice of the upcoming inspection. All inspections will utilise a common assessment checklist. Following the inspection, the landholder will be provided with written correspondence that reflects the results of the inspection and any recommended actions to be undertaken, advice and educational information.

12. Monitoring Program

The following processes will be put into place to ensure that both existing and proposed systems are adequately monitored:

- Inspections are to be carried out on existing sites where deemed necessary by the nominated authorised officer;
- On-going inspections of on-site sewage management systems are to be carried out in accordance with the inspection regime determined at the time of initial risk assessment;
- Aim to inspect all on-site sewage management complaints within 3 business days of notification;
- Where inspections indicate faulty, defective or unhealthy systems, notify the owner/occupier and then negotiate with the householder to develop a site-specific sewage management plan which will resolve the identified problem/s;
- Issue orders/notices where necessary for faulty, defective, unhealthy on-site sewage management systems (s124 Local Government Act, 1993);
- Where conditions of approval are continually not complied with, Council may revoke the approval.

13. Legislation and Related Documents

- Local Government Act 1993
- Local Government (General) Regulation 2021

14. Policy Review

This Policy:

- To be reviewed within the first year of the new Council term;
- May be reviewed and amended at any time at Council's discretion (or if legislative or State Government policy changes occur).