

## New On-Site Sewage Management Strategy

Council is implementing a new Strategy to reduce the public health and environmental risks posed by on-site sewage management systems (septics) in our community.

### Why the new Strategy?

On-site sewage management systems process wastewater generated from household not connected to Council's reticulated sewerage system. If misused, overworked, or incorrectly maintained, they will fail and cause problems. Risks posed by on-site sewage management systems include:

- Public health risks due to people being exposed to bacteria, viruses, parasites and other disease-causing organisms from raw sewage. Diseases from exposure to raw sewage include:
  - Bacterial: Salmonella, E.coli, Shigella, Trachoma
  - Viral: Gastroenteritis, Hepatitis A
  - Parasites: Giardia, Cryptosporidium, Dwarf Tapeworm, Threadworm, Hookworm
- Insects and vermin can act as vectors of diseases where they have access to raw sewage.
- Ground and surface water contamination.
- Pollution of ground water, bore water supplies and creek/river systems.
- Soil and vegetable degradation impacting useability of the land.
- Local amenity issues such as aesthetics, odour, dust, vectors and excessive noise.

### Legislation

The State Government introduced changes to the *Local Government Act 1993* in the late 1990's placing an obligation on Council's to oversee and manage the impacts posed by on-site sewage management system in their local communities.

The legislation was introduced following a major outbreak of Hepatitis A from the consumption of contaminated oysters harvested from Wallace Lake, which was attributed to human effluent runoff into the lake from nearby septic systems. One man died and hundreds fell ill. The aftermath of this incident demonstrated the impact on-site management systems can have on the health and wellbeing of

communities as well as the environment. Studies have shown that septics can cause impacts up to 50km downstream in the right conditions.

This legislation has remained in place since introduced, however Federation Council has not taken a proactive role in the management of these risks until now.

### What Does the New Strategy Involve?

The new Strategy will include:

- New houses/systems being installed assessed by Council against prescribed standards through an "Approval to Install, Construct or Alter".
- Landowners requiring an "Approval to Operate" their on-site sewage management system.
- Risk rating of each on-site sewage management system based on their potential impact on public health or the environment.
- Council officers inspecting systems at a frequency commensurate to its risk rating.

The new Strategy will be progressively rolled out over the next three years. Initial inspections will commence in early 2019. Council will focus initially on higher density population areas and properties close to environmentally sensitive areas or on smaller block sizes, whilst large rural properties will be inspected at a later date when time permits.

### Approvals

#### **Approval to Install, Construct or Alter**

Under section 68 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, an "Approval to Install, Construct or Alter" an on-site sewage management system is required. This application should be lodged at the same time as the development application new dwelling. Plans and information about the proposed system will need to be submitted with the application.

#### **Approval to Operate**

Under section 68 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, an "Approval to Operate" an on-site sewage management system is required. Council will require the owner of the property to apply for approval in the following circumstances:

- For new systems installed – following the final inspection by Council;
- For a property that has an existing system that is sold – the new owner may continue to operate the existing system for a period of up to 3 months but an application to Council must be lodged (by the new owner) within 2 months of completion of the sale; and
- Following initial inspection and risk rating – Council will initially inspect each system to check compliance with the performance standards and determine the risk rating. If your system is satisfactory, you will be issued with an ‘Approval to Operate’.

The approval will be issued with an expiry date that is commensurate with the risk rating of the system.

### Inspections

Council has a duty to monitor the performance of existing systems and take action in relation to failing systems which pose a public health or environmental risk.

All systems will be initially evaluated and given a risk rating based its performance, location, design and the local features of the land. It will take approximately 3 years to conduct risk rating inspections of all systems (2019-21).

Systems will then be inspected at an ongoing basis at frequency proportionate to their risk as outlined in the table below. The “Approval to Operate” will also be issued in accordance with the risk posed by the system.

Risk rating	Frequency of Inspections	Approval to Operate Expires
High	Every 2 years	2 years after issue
Medium	Every 5 years	5 years after issue
Low	Every 10 years	10 years after issue

On-site sewage management systems at commercial / industrial properties and pump out septs will be automatically considered high risk systems.

### Performance Standards

The *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005* specifies that an on-site sewage management system 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 odours.
- The prevention of the contamination of water.
- The prevention of the degradation of soil and vegetation.
- The discouragement of insects and vermin.
- Ensuring the persons do not come in contact with untreated sewage or effluent (whether treated or not) in their ordinary activities on the premises concerned.
- The minimisation of any adverse impacts on the amenity of the premises and surrounding lands.

Systems will be evaluated against these standards when Council staff undertake an inspection.

### Fees

- Landowners that have an on-site sewage management system on their property will be charged a minimal fee on their Rates Notice to cover the cost for Council to manage and implement this program. This fee has been set at \$20 and will commence from 1 July 2019.
- An application fee for an “Approval to Install, Construct or Alter” is applicable. This fee has been set at \$50 and will commence from 1 January 2019.
- No application fee will apply for an “Approval to Operate” during the first three years while Council is rolling out this new strategy. This fee has been set at \$50 and will commence from 1 July 2021.
- An inspection fee will be applicable for medium and high risk sewage systems. No fee is applicable for the inspection of low risk systems. The inspection fee has been set at \$120.

### More information

Visit Council’s website at [www.federationcouncil.nsw.gov.au](http://www.federationcouncil.nsw.gov.au). Alternatively, contact Council on (02) 6033 8999 and ask to speak to the Environmental Health Officer (EHO).