

Purchasing Property with a Septic System

A commonly overlooked aspect of purchasing a property is the potential presence of a septic system. Being well informed, asking the right questions and having effective conditions put into contracts of sale can save significant future costs.

Why should you care?

The current owner of a property is responsible for the effective operation of the septic system, regardless of any action or inaction of previous owners.

This means you could unsuspectingly take on the following obligations:

- Servicing and pump out overdue: estimated cost \$300
- Unapproved modification of system or system not in compliance with permit: remediation costs can reach into the \$1,000s
- System irreparably damaged or failing due to poor maintenance: full replacement of system, estimated cost \$10,000+

Septic type, size and location can also limit potential extensions or uses of buildings, preventing you from using the property as you intended.

What should you do before purchasing a property?

A few easy steps can help to ensure there are no nasty surprises after settlement:

- Ask the vendor to provide records of inspections and servicing by a licensed plumber
- Ask for inspection, servicing and, if applicable, necessary maintenance of the system be included as part of the contract for purchase
- Have a licensed plumber inspect the system to give advice on possible future issues
- Ask for the vendor to provide a copy of the Permit to Install for the system (if they do not have a copy they can apply to Council for the permit conditions and system site plans).

How Do I Know if a Property has a Septic System?

Most properties will show no sign of having a system as they are often fully contained underground.

The two ways to conclusively identify if a property has a system are:

- Lack of sewer or wastewater charges on the Section 32
- Contact Council's Environmental Health department

The map on the reverse side of this page shows the general areas which are sewered and therefore not likely to have septic systems.



Sewered Towns*

Contact Us:

For further information, please contact Council's Environmental Health team on 5662 9200 or visit Council's website: www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au/wastewater

* properties generating wastewater outside these towns will have a septic system

