

South Gippsland Septic Inspection Program

South Gippsland Shire Council has been incrementally rolling out a septic tank inspection program since its Domestic Wastewater Management Plan was adopted in 2016.

Due to the largely rural nature of the shire, any house built outside of the 12 sewerage townships will have a septic system to treat all wastewater generated. The total number of septic systems across the shire is around 10,000. Many of these are more than 30 years old, which pose an increased risk due to a range of factors.

Ian Mewburn, Council's Environmental Health Coordinator was happy to explain more about the program.

"We have been concentrating on a town at a time to minimize anxiety and to keep the focus on the fact that this is a health and wellbeing issue, not Council being a nuisance for no reason. Throughout 2019 we have been in touch with approximately 1600 landowners. So far we've had a positive response because most people realise that this is about keeping themselves and their neighbours safe.

"There have been media reports about these inspections costing thousands of dollars – this is simply untrue. The cost should be between \$80 and \$160 depending on the plumber and the time it takes. Some neighbours are getting a better price by getting a plumber to service all of their systems on the same day.

"Where a septic is in need of maintenance any works being done are only what is required to keep the system working well into the future. It's likely that anyone finding that they needed significant works were at high risk of complete system failure or adversely affecting the health of themselves or others, so were fortunate to have had the service when they did.

"This program is about educating property owners on the importance of protecting the health and wellbeing of people and the environment from potentially untreated human waste. Ensuring that septic systems across the Shire are working properly also allows sustainable development within the Tarwin Catchment – without implementing the Domestic Wastewater Management Plan housing density could be no greater than one house for every 100 acres.

"In the past we haven't been proactive in ensuring that owners are maintaining their septic systems, so we are finding that the level of knowledge in the community is quite low and a significant percentage of systems need at least minor repairs. We are also hearing many stories of people who have purchased properties only to find six months later that the septic system is failing – this program will help to reduce the occurrence of situations like this," said Mr Mewburn.

More information about the Domestic Wastewater Management Plan is available at:

http://www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au/downloads/download/264/domestic_wastewater_management_plan_dwmp

PR2434 8/8/19

For media enquiries, please contact the Communications team on 5662 9200
South Gippsland Shire Council, 9 Smith St. (Private Bag 4), Leongatha 3953
communications@southgippsland.vic.gov.au
www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au