



WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT POLICY

Policy Number	C78	Directorate	Development Services
Council Meeting Date	23 October 2019	Department	Environmental Health
Review Date	October 2023	Primary Author	Environmental Health Coordinator

1. POLICY OBJECTIVE

Wastewater Management Policy (C78) (the Policy) sets out how Council will manage the approval of prospective septic tank systems and the ongoing monitoring and management of existing systems.

2. POLICY SCOPE

The Policy applies to all wastewater generated within South Gippsland Shire, other than wastewater disposed to:

- The sewer network; and
- Wastewater systems designed to discharge more than 5,000L of sewage per day.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 Background

The *Municipal Domestic Wastewater Management Plan* provides Shire wide direction on the management of wastewater, this policy adds further interpretation and clarification.

All decision making on wastewater management will be made with a primary focus on protecting public health and the environment. The aim of effective wastewater management is to enable use of land while also ensuring legal requirements are met.

The Policy includes specific situations in which non-compliance with current standards may be considered acceptable, where it creates a better public health or environmental outcome. The resulting system must be as close as possible to the requirements of this Policy, as determined by Council staff, irrespective of potential cost. This may be achieved through (where appropriate):

- Relocation of system
- Additional secondary treatment processes
- Increase in treatment field size (land area)

3.2 Connection to a Sewer Network

Council will continue to encourage the expansion of the sewer network and connection of properties to that network throughout the Shire.

Where *South Gippsland Water* and *Gippsland Water* consider sewer connection to be available, Council will:

- a. Require new constructions to connect to the sewer network
- b. Require existing septic tank systems be decommissioned and the property connect to the sewer network if the system:
 - i. Poses an increased risk to public health or the environment
 - ii. Would otherwise need to be modified or upgraded.

3.3 Existing Septic Tank Systems



The management of existing septic tank systems will be in accordance with the adopted *Municipal Domestic Wastewater Management Plan*, the principles of which are:

- a. Education: increasing knowledge of the importance of effective management of septic tank systems, and the impacts of poorly performing systems
- b. Data Improvement: continuously review Councils records of septic tank systems to ensure they are accurate and complete
- c. Compliance Facilitation: where education does not result in voluntary compliance, undertake direct communication to encourage property owners to maintain their system
- d. Enforcement: where voluntary compliance does not occur the Compliance and Enforcement Policy will be applied
- e. Reporting: providing to relevant internal and external stakeholders, annual reporting on key indicators of septic tank system risk across the Shire.

3.4 Prospective Septic Tank Systems Compliance

Approval of new septic tank systems and alterations to existing systems are required to comply with Environment Protection Act 1970, State Environment Protection Policies, Certificates of Approval, the Code of Practice – Onsite Wastewater Management and applicable Australian Standards.

Compliance to legislation ensures that:

- a. New septic tank systems are of a type that treats and retains all sewage within lot boundaries; and
- b. Alterations to existing septic tank systems:
 - i. Upgrade the system to meet current standards, or
 - ii. Where it is not possible to meet current standards due to site constraints, the system is upgraded to give a better public health and environmental outcome.

3.5 Temporary Wastewater Storage Tanks

A temporary wastewater storage tank attached to a portable toilet, portable amenity block or temporary group accommodation must, unless otherwise approved by the Environmental Health Department of Council:

- a. Comply with the *Code of Practice – Guidelines for the provision of portable toilets on construction sites and at events where connection to a sewer is not practical* where connection to a sewer is not practical; or
- b. Be approved as part of a planning permit, and
- c. Be emptied pursuant to the Environment Protection (Industrial Waste Resource) Regulations 2009 by a licensed Hazardous Waste professional, licensed with the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), and
- d. Be maintained to prevent a nuisance from being created.

3.6 Investigation and Enforcement Action with regard to Septic Tank Systems

Failing, ineffective, or non-permitted septic tank systems are required to be investigated:

- a. By suitable qualified and/or experienced persons,
- b. In accordance with the *Environment Protection Act 1970* and/or *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, as appropriate.

Council considers the following when taking compliance and enforcement action:



- a. The education and information previously provided to the property owner;
- b. The demonstrated maintenance records and level of functioning of the septic tank system;
- c. The conditions placed on the system in the approved permit issued by Council; and
- d. The extent or possible extent of impacts to public health or the environment.

When undertaking compliance and enforcement with property owners, Council will refer to the Compliance and Enforcement Policy (C64).

4. RISK ASSESSMENT

This policy seeks to minimise the risks to public health and the environment posed by wastewater discharges. Effective management of septic tank systems and other methods for retaining wastewater are integral to ensuring safe drinking water within catchment areas, and water of a suitable quality, when obtained from dams, bores and other sources.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES STATEMENT

The Environmental Health Department of Council will implement this Policy by:

- Educating the community on the importance of effective wastewater management.
- Educating the community on the wastewater management options available to them.
- Consulting with all relevant agencies on issues and proposals involving wastewater
- Applying the principles of this Policy to current and future septic tank systems.

6. POLICY DEFINITIONS

EPA	Environmental Protection Authority
Septic Tank System	A system for the bacterial, biological, chemical or physical treatment of sewage, and includes all tanks, beds, sewers, drains, pipes, fittings, appliances and land used in connection with the system.
South Gippsland Water and Gippsland Water	Water authority organisations within South Gippsland Shire.
Temporary Wastewater Storage Tank	A tank or system of tanks that retains sewage and/or wastewater, and does not treat the waste or discharge to land or water.
Wastewater	Includes toilet waste, water from showers, baths, kitchens, pools and any other water using devices.

7. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Council Policy (document available on Council's website)

[Municipal Domestic Wastewater Management Plan 2016-2020](#)

[Compliance and Enforcement Policy \(C64\)](#)

Legislative Provisions, Standards, Guidelines and Principles

[Environment Protection Act 1970](#)

[Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008](#)

[State Environment Protection Policy \(Waters\) 2018](#)

[Code of Practice – onsite wastewater management \(EPA Publication 891.4, 2016\)](#)

[Ministerial Guidelines for planning permit applications in open potable water supply catchments 2012](#)



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