



*South Gippsland
Shire Council*

Domestic Wastewater Management Plan 2022-2026

Annual Implementation Update

2024-2025

Domestic Wastewater Management Plan 2022-2026

Council Plan Objective – Protecting and Enhancing our Environment

- Initiative:

Annual implementation of the Domestic Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) 2022-2026

			Year 3 – 2024/2025	
STRATEGY	ACTION	When / Staging	Progress Update	Status
1. Further develop information management systems				
Improve the quality and quantity of wastewater related information captured	Identify and collect the appropriate information required for all installed septic tank systems	Ongoing	<p>Historical wastewater permits have been reviewed and completed “permits to use” have been entered into Council’s corporate systems.</p> <p>New procedures have been developed and implemented ensuring new OWMS permit applications are processed within required statutory timeframes.</p>	Completed
	Data capture processes to be reviewed to ensure efficiency of data entry and appropriate use of data fields for reporting and document processing purposes	Ongoing	Internal OWMS procedures have been reviewed and updated as required. All OWMS permit data is accurately assessed and processed at each permit stage. As a result, permit processing times have significantly improved, which enables up-to-date and accurate reporting.	Completed

	Develop and maintain partnerships and reporting agreements with service agents to improve reporting accuracy and efficiency	Ongoing	<p>Relationships with stakeholders, builders, plumbers and property owners have significantly improved and further improvements are a priority.</p> <p>A successful OWMS conversation breakfast was held in June 2025 with over 20 participants from all over Victoria in attendance. The session enables a two-way, robust conversation around Council's OWMS service, legislation change and process updates.</p>	Completed
Better utilise information and Communication Technologies tools to	Maintain a relevant and accurate webpage, with links to/ from relevant external pages	Ongoing	Council's OWMS webpage has been reviewed and updated accordingly. Further updates have been scheduled for 2025-26 to address and outline upcoming legislation changes.	Completed
	Cross reference wastewater licence information with other relevant permit controls, e.g. building or planning permits	Ongoing	A standardised internal planning referral process and response has been developed and implemented for all planning permit applications referred due to OWMS triggers.	Completed
	Utilise in the field data management and communication tools	Ongoing	iPads have recently been acquired for use in the field. Assessment of current IT solutions for mobile data management has commenced.	On Track
	Investigate suitable data sources for groundwater levels, soil types, effective transpiration rates and treatment ability to identify high-risk areas	Ongoing	<p>Review of existing local OWMS data, including township LCAs and other studies based in unstructured sandy locations throughout Victoria and Australia.</p> <p>This information is being collated, reviewed and adopted as part of Council's Onsite Wastewater Management Policy.</p>	On Track

	Investigate costs and potential benefits of GIS-based wastewater mapping system including retrospective data entry	Ongoing	<p>Thorough investigation into GIS-based mapping for OWMS installations has been undertaken with the assistance of external service providers.</p> <p>Initial cost-benefit analysis for GIS-based mapping of OWMS installs within South Gippsland has failed to demonstrate an effective use of Council funding.</p> <p>A further review will be undertaken before a final decision is made prior to the implementation of the 2026-2030 DWMP.</p>	On Track
Investigate and implement an online portal for wastewater contractors to use when submitting information to Council	Develop and implement an incentive strategy to promote the uptake of a Council approved online information management system i.e. a published list of 'Approved Service Agents'. Strategy to be implemented through Council's Wastewater Management Policy. Encourage, through education and incentives, wastewater contractors to adopt approved systems.	2025/26	The Wastewater Management Policy (C78) is currently under review, with a view to including these actions. The policy review is due to be finalised in the 2025/26 reporting year.	On Track
Risk Prioritisation	Investigate ways to use Council's corporate information management systems (Pathway/ TRIM/ POZI) to record on-site wastewater treatment systems that are known to be failing and causing risks to public and environmental health (low, medium, low-risk rating).	2025/26	<p>Preliminary scoping work for this initiative has been undertaken.</p> <p>Action is not due to start until next year, however the team has commenced re-establishing the foundations for corporate systems from which risk identification for properties can be established.</p>	On Track
	Develop a procedure to record when risks have been addressed and removed	2024/2025	This will be developed in conjunction with the action above.	On Track

2. Education and community consultation

Raise profile of wastewater system operation and maintenance requirements within the municipality and region	Attend the South Gippsland Shire Council Sustainability Festival and other relevant community events to promote wastewater management best practice	Ongoing	South Gippsland Sustainability Festival has been discontinued. Officers are investigating other relevant festival and event opportunities.	Completed
	Implement targeted education campaigns to property owners, occupiers and agents in high-risk areas at appropriate times	Ongoing	Applied on an as needed basis to specific properties. Enhanced campaigns to follow for the duration of the DWMP implementation.	On Track
	Provide readily accessible wastewater management information in hard copy and web-based format	2022/2023	Existing OWMS information has been reviewed, republished and is available. This action will continue to be ongoing.	Completed
Provide regular opportunities to improve community and stakeholder understanding and support of improved wastewater management projects and programs	Develop and implement an ongoing community education program	Ongoing	Due to commence in 2025/26	On Track
	Provide information on septic tank system best practice to property owners via community outlets and Council publications	Ongoing	Following the implementation of the updated EPA <i>Guidelines Onsite Wastewater Management Systems</i> in May 2024, Council adopted a <i>best practice</i> review and assessment process. This process has been publicised widely through Council communication channels.	Completed
	Liaise with communities and local water authorities to progress community sewerage, where appropriate	Ongoing	Strong advocacy support is provided to sewer all priority townships and will continue as opportunities arise.	On Track
	Work with the EPA, Water Authorities, Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) and other interested stakeholders to achieve shared goals	Ongoing	Attended regular meetings with the EPA, building strong working relationships. Council continues to meet regularly with other regulatory authorities. These relationships are important to Council and our stakeholders and will continue.	Completed

Develop and implement a process that will ensure all new property owners are informed about what type of on-site wastewater treatment system is on or available to their property	<p>Section 32 notices to include basic information on property's on-site wastewater treatment system including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property on on-site wastewater treatment system indefinitely. • Property in a declared water catchment area. • Any outstanding notices issued on property with respect to on-site wastewater treatment system 	Ongoing	Further work is required on this action in consultation with other internal departments. Due for completion 2025/26.	On Track
	Develop a process with Rates to be able to add or remove the available details on Section 32 notices as required	Ongoing	Follows on from action above. Due for completion 2025/26.	On Track
Disseminate information on landowner/occupier responsibilities and maintenance requirements for residents with on-site wastewater treatment systems when properties change hands	Develop a 'new residents kit' for all new residents who are moving into a property serviced by an on-site wastewater system	2022/2023	This action has been pushed out to 2025/26 due to the delay in the release of the OWMS Guidelines from the EPA.	Monitor
	Upon notification of property transfer, provide new residents with details about their on-site wastewater management system including the type of system, maintenance and service conditions, a copy of the property's wastewater permit and plan (if available)	2022/2023	This action has been started but has been delayed due to additional resources required in Council's Rates team following the introduction of the emergency services levy. This action will be completed by 2025/26.	Monitor
Develop education materials for property owners and users of holiday accommodation, particularly those in sandy soils	Develop education materials for property owners who use their property for holiday type purposes (absentee land owners) to educate on matters such as restarting on-site wastewater systems after a period of absence and what to do when you leave the property	2022/2023	The educational materials are currently in draft, with collaboration taking place. The Communications team to finalise materials. Due for completion 2025/26.	Monitor

	Develop resources for property owners to provide to guests staying at holiday houses and accommodation serviced by on-site wastewater systems	2022/2023	This action planned for 2025 as part of the same educational package for our community.	Monitor
Develop targeted resources for industry	Develop dedicated education of property agents and owners of short-term rentals regarding management of on-site wastewater treatment systems in holiday rentals in a Communications Plan	2023/2024	Educational material is currently being developed. Due for completion 2025/26.	On Track
3. Strategic planning and infrastructure development				
Reduce impact of off-site discharges through available mitigation remedies	Investigate health protection measures to address high-risk and accessible contaminated stormwater drains or groundwaters	Ongoing	Environmental water sampling process developed and implemented for water contamination in the Tarwin Catchment Areas.	Completed
	Seek improved maintenance and development of stormwater drainage in priority townships in partnership with Maintenance and Engineering departments	Ongoing	As priority townships are identified, an appropriate maintenance and monitoring plan will be developed with assistance from other Council departments.	On Track
	Identify funding opportunities to implement improvement options in priority townships	Ongoing	Council continues to look for funding opportunities.	On Track
Investigate alternative, community-scale treatment systems for priority townships and availability of funding	Investigate innovative and sustainable community-scale or on-site wastewater treatment and water cycle management solutions in partnership with key stakeholders	Ongoing	In consultation with other stakeholders such as EPA and system designers Council will contribute to the evaluation of new systems, providing they comply with the relevant legislation and codes of practice.	On Track

Liaise with appropriate departments to ensure that planning and infrastructure proposals adequately address wastewater management needs for townships	Assess existing block density in unsewered townships and investigate options to reduce density to sustainable levels	Ongoing	Ongoing work has commenced with Council's Strategic Planning team regarding the Coastal Strategy planning and overlay updates (LSIO). Applications for new land subdivisions are assessed against robust assessment guidelines to ensure lots can treat and retain wastewater onsite.	On Track
	Develop clear policy guidelines for future developments with unsewered townships and for unsewered allotments within sewer townships	Ongoing	This action is subject to review of the Wastewater Management Policy which is expected to be completed in 2026.	On Track
	Review Planning Scheme and other relevant Council policies to identify opportunities for improvements to existing wastewater management clauses and/or policies	Ongoing	This is a continuous process. Every opportunity is taken to review policies. Expert input is regularly provided to planning the referral process as well as specific property issues.	On Track
	Continue to investigate and update appropriate design standards for high-risk townships so as to inform any future improvement plans	Ongoing	Council is committed to assessing the implications of standards for the best environmental and health outcome for our communities.	On Track
4. Environmental monitoring				
Develop an environmental monitoring program in cohabitation with other agencies	Identify and collate relevant existing environmental data for the South Gippsland Shire to quantify wastewater impacts on waterways, groundwater, public health and water catchments	2022/2023	Collation of existing information and data has been completed. This information will inform Council's development of OWMS policy and procedures, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas.	Complete
	Design and implement an environmental monitoring strategy in collaboration with EPA, South Gippsland Water and Gippsland Water including industrial areas, high-risk locations and groundwater, for environmental and health contaminants (e.g. nutrients and pathogens)	2022/2023	An ad hoc sampling program has started for implementation when high-risk activities and/or contamination has been identified. Design of Environmental Sampling Program complete. Currently exploring funding opportunities for implementation.	On Track

	Identify source locations for environmental monitoring and produce a publicly available map which shows these locations	2022/2023	A number of locations have been identified across the Shire to be sampled.	On Track
Implement an environmental monitoring program	Implement a comprehensive environmental monitoring program including the collection of water samples from selected locations, and arranging their analysis at a NATA-approved laboratory	2021/2022	Monitoring locations have been identified and preparations underway for our wastewater sampling program. Funding opportunities for the implementation of this program is being explored.	Monitor
	Prepare an annual report outlining the results of the environmental monitoring program and any improvements that have been made	2021/2022	A report will be prepared once a program has been implemented.	Monitor
Secure funding for ongoing environmental monitoring program	Seek and source an ongoing funding stream for environmental monitoring sampling and analysis	2025/2026	Action for future years	On Track
5. Management of commercial properties				
Develop wastewater standard conditions for wastewater permits issued for commercial businesses	Develop and include standard wastewater conditions for commercial properties to have pre-treatment (i.e. grease trap), similar to those implemented by South Gippsland Water trade waste arrangements	2022/2023	Action completed. Standard conditions developed and implemented.	Complete
	Update South Gippsland Shire Council Wastewater Management Policy to allow Council to request on-site wastewater treatment system upgrades (i.e. pre-treatment), including where a new commercial premise is established either in a new or existing construction, where a change of use occurs for the land or building, or where a business significantly changes which impacts on the existing wastewater system	2022/2023	Policy currently under review – to be completed in 2025	Monitor

Develop specific education for food businesses and on-site wastewater treatment system	Develop education for commercial food businesses in unsewered areas i.e. use of chemicals and impact on on-site wastewater treatment systems	2022/2023	Determined that this information was best managed on a case by case basis due to different factors such as to site conditions impacting each site. Information regarding the use of chemicals with wastewater systems is included in certificates to use.	Completed
	Link education to other programs already conducted by South Gippsland Shire Council including Food Safety Management activities	2022/2023	All education materials developed and provided link to other programs conducted by Council.	Completed
Improve the relationship between South Gippsland Shire Council and EPA works approvals	Establish a process for the exchange of information between the Shire and EPA on commercial properties that exceed 5,000 litres per day	Ongoing	A strong relationship has been developed with the Gippsland region EPA and officers meet regularly to share information.	Completed
	Develop a better relationship between Council and the EPA to allow better sharing of information, particularly with regards to wastewater systems with EPA works approvals	Ongoing	As per action above.	Completed
Audit commercial businesses in identified high-risk areas	Conduct an audit for all commercial businesses located in the 'high-risk' locations identified in this plan to assess adequacy and to identify any immediate public or environmental health risks – every three years	2022/2023	Action commenced but will take longer than first predicted. Will now be completed in the later years of the plan following improved information and data collection to inform any audit.	Monitor
6. Continue to develop and implement compliance management				
Implement an education program to assist property owners to understand and comply with their legal responsibilities for monitoring and maintaining their wastewater systems	Utilise web-based and hard copy information to promote correct maintenance of wastewater systems.	Ongoing	Maintenance of wastewater systems provided as part of certificate to use. Information also available on website and in hardcopy when requested.	Completed
	Public contact lists of appropriate servicing agents.	Ongoing	Details of service agents continuously updated and provided on request.	Completed

	Send reminders to all owners requiring annual service contracts or three-yearly de-sludging of primary systems	Ongoing	Reminder letters being sent as part of a broad education program. Currently reviewing the letters being sent and how often they are sent.	On Track
Improve electronic data capture and storage to maximise administrative efficiencies and assist in appropriate targeting of resources	Update existing hard copy records onto Council's electronic database.	Ongoing	Over 2000 service reports have been updated into Council's system.	On Track
Develop South Gippsland Shire Council wastewater installation guidelines	Implement a system to follow-up on owners who fail to maintain service contracts.	2022/2023	System has been implemented but issues have been identified. Looking at ways to improve the process as it is labor intensive.	Monitor
	Review service reports and follow-up any outstanding failures.	2022/2023	Service reports reviewed and outstanding failures followed up as received.	On Track
	Implement an audit program to confirm accuracy of service reports and wastewater treatment system performance.	2022/2023	The audit program has been delayed. It has proven to be more complex than expected.	Monitor
Review South Gippsland Shire Council Wastewater Management Policy	<p>Review South Gippsland Shire Council's Wastewater Management Policy in line with recent legislative changes (Environment Protection Act 2020). Policy update to also include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major/ minor alterations and a clear definition of each; • Pump-out systems and the conditions in which they will be approved; • Council's domestic bore position and investigation process; and • Any other matter identified in the review. 	2022/2023	Wastewater Management Policy review underway, it's anticipated to be finalised late in 2025.	Monitor

Develop a wastewater compliance and enforcement policy and associated procedures	Develop robust wastewater compliance processes including procedures for managing non-compliance	2022/2023	Compliance processes link to existing policies and procedures managed by the team. The Wastewater Management Policy will include specific compliance processes.	On Track
7. Regulatory management				
Advocate to government agencies and other stakeholders to improve the regulatory framework within which Council operates	Seek the development and implementation of improved wastewater management legislation and guidelines.	Ongoing	Ongoing as opportunities arise. The Health team provide feedback to our legislators when requested from regulators.	On Track
	Influence government agencies to better coordinate wastewater and water supply policy and legislation.	Ongoing	Ongoing as opportunities arise. The Health team provide feedback to agencies when requested.	On Track
	Work with EPA Victoria to facilitate improved designs for high-risk areas, such as coarse sand and heavy clay.	Ongoing	Ongoing as opportunities arise. Health staff meet regularly with EPA where system design are considered for compliance and improvement.	On Track
Alternative or innovative uses of existing legislation provisions to enhance wastewater management processes	Investigate options for applying controls to bore installation and use in sandy soil townships.	2022/2023	Action not yet commenced though consultation is conducted with Southern Rural Water on specific properties. This action will be advanced in late 2025.	Monitor
	Review wastewater management controls for temporary or seasonal use facilities (building sites, festivals, camping on private land)	2022/2023	Completed review of wastewater for camping on private land and building sites as part of General Local Law Review. New code introduced.	Monitor
Update the existing South Gippsland Shire Council Wastewater Management Policy	Review and update Council's Wastewater Management Policy in line with the new Environment Protection Act 2020 and the Environment Protection Regulations 2021.	2022/2023	Policy review underway. Anticipated completion late 2025	Monitor

Develop Council's Wastewater Management Policy through evidence-based investigation	Identify funding opportunities to undertake Land Capability Assessments (LCAs) of priority townships and implement findings into Council's strategic policy and statutory programs	2022 to 2025	Continuously look for funding sources to undertake LCAs of unsewered townships.	Monitor
	Where appropriate, standardise guidelines and processes with neighbouring Councils and water authorities.	2022 to 2025	Policy Review underway – anticipated late 2025	On Track
	Conduct targeted monitoring of stormwater systems, surface waters and groundwaters in high-risk areas.	2022 to 2025	Monitoring locations identified, sampling to commence once funding is secured.	On Track
8. Reporting, audits and review				
Annual internal review (with amendments as required).	Conduct an annual review and assessment of the progress achieved in the previous year of the Domestic Wastewater Management Plan implementation and action plan	2022/2023 2023/2024 2024/2025 2025/2026	On track.	On Track
	Prepare a report for Council and make publicly available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual review to identify and allow for any major changes in wastewater legislation and industry – particularly as the implementation of the Environment Protection Act 2020 is implemented 	2022/2023 2023/2024 2024/2025 2025/2026	On track.	On Track
	Conduct an audit to assess and report on the progress of the Domestic Wastewater Management Plan implementation and action plan every three years and publish the report on Council's website	2024/2025	Audit to be conducted within nominated timeframe	On Track

Five-yearly review and report of this plan	Review and update the Domestic Wastewater Management Plan every five years as required by the State Environment Protection Policy: Waters.	2026	DWMP review will be conducted as required by the applicable legislation, noting State Environment Protection Policy: Waters no longer applies.	On Track
Develop and strengthen external stakeholder relationships and collaboration	Identify shared water/ wastewater objectives and strategies with external water authorities and stakeholders.	Ongoing	Strong relationships have been developed with external stakeholders.	Completed
	Work with Southern Rural Water to develop a domestic bore installation process, including developing accurate mapping of bores within the Shire and providing property owners/ occupiers with information about the risks of using bore water and how to safely use that water around the home	Ongoing	There are challenges associated with bores being managed by an external agency often with conflicting outcomes. Further work with Southern Rural Water is required to have effective bore location information available to our stakeholders.	Monitor
	Promote and facilitate ongoing coordination of internal resources into wastewater management strategies and projects	Ongoing	Internal resources are required to deal with day to day operational management of wastewater and other statutory functions. A recent structural change to the team has resulted in improved response to wastewater issues.	Completed
Community engagement	Conduct community engagement every five years in line with the Domestic Wastewater Management Plan five-yearly review process	2021/2022 2025/2026	Community engagement was conducted to develop the 2022-2026 DWMP. Further engagement will be undertaken as part of the development of any future DWMP.	Completed
Advocate for and contribute to reform of the wastewater legislative framework	Advocate for improvements to legislative framework.	Ongoing	Ongoing as opportunities arise. Council works closely with external agencies such as EPA.	Completed
	Provide input into proposed legislation and standards pertaining to domestic wastewater.	Ongoing	Input provided as opportunities arise	Completed