

ON-SITE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT POLICY



Responsible Department: Development and Economic Growth
Responsible Section: Strategy and Land Use
Responsible Officer: Senior Health & Environmental Coordinator

Objectives

The primary objectives of this policy are:

- To facilitate the safe and sustainable management of on-site wastewater systems; and
- To observe Council's obligations under current State legislation and specifically the NSW Environment Protection and Health Guidelines for On-Site Sewage Management for Single House Households (Feb 1998). These remain the current NSW Guidelines of the Director-General of the NSW Division of Local Government, for the purposes of mandatory consideration by Councils pursuant to clause 29 of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005.

Secondary objectives are to:

- To communicate the requirements necessary for existing and potential owners to gain approval for effective installation and operation of on-site wastewater systems.
- To educate property owners, managers and plumbers of the best practices in construction and maintenance of these systems.
- To make best use of the relevant Australian and New Zealand Standards applicable to on-site wastewater with applied scientific knowledge.

Introduction

On-site wastewater is produced when dwellings that are not connected to a Council (piped) sewer produce blackwater (toilet and kitchen) and greywater (bathroom and laundry). There may be other wastewaters that would also qualify.

An on-site wastewater system is a physical collection of pipes, chamber(s), and dedicated areas of land that treat any domestic wastewater. Such systems may vary considerably in their components, often with successive modules of treatment systems, e.g. wetland systems or ultraviolet disinfection systems.

This policy has been prepared to facilitate the management of on-site wastewater systems within the Narrabri Shire Council area. The policy observes Council's obligations within current State legislation.

This policy applies to all on-site wastewater systems (including those for greywater) servicing dwellings and other buildings, including schools, commercial or industrial premises, where the wastewater is treated on site and the effluent is disposed of by land application. Special conditions apply to components used for dwellings where the normal occupancy is up to 10 persons. The separation of greywater, where an on-site wastewater system is installed, requires the approval of Council.

This policy does not regulate infrastructure connected to Council's piped sewer system. However, for premises connected to sewer, the discharge of greywater onto the allotment (rather than the sewer) is covered by this Policy.

NSW Health sets out various policies that also apply to on-site systems, particularly the certification of manufactured products such as aerated wastewater treatment systems and septic tanks, and other commercially available products. Certification of greywater diversion devices is covered by WaterMark certification, but the installation must meet the requirements of this policy.

Policy

Narrabri Shire Council has developed a detailed On Site Wastewater Management Strategy (Sept. 2013) (the strategy) in order to meet the objectives of this policy. This strategy can be accessed on Council's website at www.narrabri.nsw.gov.au and should be read in conjunction with this policy. Council will assess, approve and inspect on-site wastewater management systems as described in the strategy.

Legislation and Guidelines

Local Government Act 1993

Councils regulate the installation and operation of systems of sewage management under the Local Government Act 1993 ('the Act') (Section 68). Approvals to both install and operate are required for all sewage management systems under the Act. Under Section 626 of the Act it is an offence to not to comply with an approval and/or install or operate a system of sewage management without an approval.

The Local Government (General) Regulation 2005

- Applies to all fixed sewage management systems that do not discharge directly to a public sewer;
- States that Council approval is required under Section 68 of the Local Government Act 1993 for the installation, construction or alteration of a sewage management facility, as well as its ongoing operation;
- Stipulates environment and health matters to be taken into consideration in determining applications for approval to install, construct or alter sewage management facilities;
- Provides general performance standards for sewage management facilities;
- Provides further conditions of approval in relation to operation of system of sewage management;
- Specifies the accreditation role of NSW Health. This relates to the types of systems which may be installed.

Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997

The Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 ('POEO Act') provides Council with powers to take timely and effective regulatory action where sewage management systems are failing and/or causing pollution.

Environment & Health Protection Guidelines On-site Sewage Management for Single Households 1998

The Guidelines, developed by the Department of Local Government in conjunction with NSW Health, the EPA and other relevant State Government stakeholders, maintain that effective Council regulation of sewage management systems requires a planned risk management approach. The Guidelines address issues such as regulatory frameworks, the development of strategies (such as Council's "On-site Wastewater Management Strategy"), administration and operational issues, site assessment principles and principles for selection and operation of sewage management systems. The guidelines are specified guidelines for the purposes of Clauses 29, 44 & 45 of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005. The Guidelines are a matter for consideration by the Council in relation to applications for approval to install and approval to operate a sewage management system.

Other Standards/Guidelines

There are further standards and guidelines utilised by Council officers to assess applications and conduct inspections, which include:

- AS/NZS 1547:2012 Onsite Domestic Wastewater Management;
- NSW Guidelines for Urban & Residential Use of Reclaimed Water (NSW Recycled Water Coordination Committee);
- Environmental Guidelines for the Reuse of Effluent in Irrigation (Department of Environment and Conservation); and
- NSW Health's Greywater Reuse in Sewered Single Domestic Premises.

Assigning a Risk Rating

Risk-ratings will be assigned by considering the risk of the area in which the system is located against the performance of the system. Once the Council officer or consultant has inspected a system, an 'on-site sewage management system risk matrix' will be applied. The matrix is based on AS/NZS 4360:2004 Risk Management Guidelines and is shown in the strategy.

Systems are classified High, Medium and Low Risk according to the potential environmental or health risk they pose. The main considerations in determining the risk category include:

- Location and size of block of land (e.g. village allotments and farms);
- System design, condition and observed performance;
- Hydraulic load generated by activities;
- Soil type;
- Vegetation coverage;
- Slope of land in application area;

- Distance to watercourses, drains and property boundaries; and
- Surface or subsurface discharge of effluent.

Inspection Program

Council will implement a strategic inspection program, to ensure a systematic and ongoing management and monitoring of on-site wastewater management systems. Inspections will be conducted on a risk-based assessment as outlined above.

All on-site systems will be inspected once initially. Areas identified by Council as a high-risk or a high priority will be inspected first, however, all systems will eventually be subject to an initial inspection. The initial inspection is required to assign a risk rating to each individual system, to issue the appropriate approvals, and to update Council’s On-Site Wastewater Management System Register.

As detailed in the strategy, inspections will be carried out at the frequency below:

Risk Category	Inspection Frequency
Low	Upon complaint or request only
Medium	Every 5 years
High	Every 2 years

Fees and Charges

Fees for inspections of new system installations and the initial Approval to Operate are included in the fees for Applications to Install.

Council’s inspection program fees are charged in accordance with Council’s Schedule of Fees and Charges as outlined in the annual Operational Plan (available at www.narrabri.nsw.gov.au). Fees collected will contribute to (but not limited to) the following requirements of the program:

- Maintenance of an “On-site Wastewater Management System” register;
- An Inspection Program in accordance with the criteria set out in this strategy;
- Administrative support including correspondence and enquiry support;
- Strategy review and upgrading as required;
- Ongoing education of system owners; and
- Policy/strategy amendment as required by legislation.

Fees will be shown as a service charge on annual rate notices for all properties listed on Council’s “On-site Wastewater Management” register. Fees for follow-up inspections may be charged if continued non-compliance occurs. Fees are charged to cover the cost of providing the service which Council is required to provide by law.

Complaints

Complaints regarding failing on-site wastewater management systems, or operation of on-site wastewater management systems not in accordance with approval, will be investigated in accordance with Council's Enforcement Policy. Legitimate complaints are treated very seriously and in confidence to comply with privacy laws and policies.

Policy Review

It is proposed that a major review of this policy will be undertaken every three years after adoption.

As system improvements occur, and knowledge and performance data become available, Council's database will expand. This information combined with stakeholder feedback relating to the implementation of wastewater management programs will be used to inform future policy direction. At the first review of the policy, sufficient information and data is expected to be available to review resources to continue the further implementation of on-site wastewater management programs and re-assess educational and compliance initiatives.

References

- Local Government Act 1993.
- The Local Government (General) Regulation 2005.
- Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997.
- Environment & Health Protection Guidelines On-site Sewage Management for Single Households 1998.
- AS/NZS 1547:2012 Onsite Domestic Wastewater Management.
- NSW Guidelines for Urban & Residential Use of Reclaimed Water (NSW Recycled Water Coordination Committee).
- Environmental Guidelines for the Reuse of Effluent in Irrigation (Department of Environment and Conservation); and
- NSW Health's Greywater Reuse in Sewered Single Domestic Premises.

Measure of Success

The success of this policy will be measured in terms of its effectiveness in achieving its goals and objectives, such as:

- Increased number of approvals to operate issued by Council.
- Minimal complaints.
- Increased compliance with approvals.
- The updating of Council's on-site sewage management system register.

- Minimising pollution; and
- Awareness of requirements and systems.

History

MINUTE NUMBER	MEETING DATE	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE
241/2014	15 April 2014	Adopted