

ONSITE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT POLICY

Responsible Department:	Planning and Sustainability
Responsible Section:	Planning and Development
Responsible Officer:	Manager Planning and Development

Objective

- To facilitate the safe and sustainable management of onsite wastewater systems;
- To observe Council's obligations under current State legislation and specifically the current NSW Government's Guidelines for Onsite Sewage Management for Single House Households (Feb 1998). These remain a mandatory consideration by Councils pursuant to clause 29 of the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* (NSW);
- To communicate the requirements necessary for existing and potential owners to gain approval for effective installation and operation of onsite wastewater systems;
- To educate property owners, managers, and plumbers of the best practices in construction and maintenance of these systems;

Introduction

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

An onsite 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.

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

NSW Health sets out various policies that also apply to onsite 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

1. Definitions

Term	Meaning
OWS	Onsite Wastewater System
OWMP	Onsite Wastewater Management Plan
The Strategy	Narrabri Shire Council's Onsite Wastewater Management Strategy

2. Application

- 2.1. This policy applies to all onsite wastewater systems (including those for greywater) servicing dwellings and other buildings where the wastewater is treated on site and the effluent is disposed of by land application, including:
 - (a) Schools;
 - (b) Commercial premises; or
 - (c) Industrial premises.
- 2.2. Special conditions apply to components used for dwellings where the normal occupancy is up to 10 persons.
- 2.3. The separation of greywater, where an onsite wastewater system is installed, requires the approval of Council.
- 2.4. Please see Council's Onsite Wastewater Management Strategy (the Strategy) on Council's website for more information. Council will assess, approve and inspect onsite wastewater management systems as described in the Strategy.

3. Limitations

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

4. Legislative Requirements

- 4.1. Council will take into account the following when dealing with Onsite Wastewaters Systems:
 - (a) *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW) s 68 - Approvals to both install and operate are required for all sewage management systems are dealt with under this section.
 - (b) *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW) s 626 – It is an offence to not comply with an approval or install or operate a system of sewerage management without an approval under this section.
 - (c) *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* (NSW) –
 - (i) Applies to all fixed sewage management systems that do not discharge directly to a public sewer;
 - (ii) 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;
 - (iii) Stipulates environment and health matters to be taken into consideration in determining applications for approval to install, construct or alter sewage management facilities;
 - (iv) Provides general performance standards for sewage management facilities;

- (v) Provides further conditions of approval in relation to operation of system of sewage management; and
 - (vi) Specifies the accreditation role of NSW Health. This relates to the types of systems which may be installed.
- 4.2. *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* (NSW) - provides Council with powers to take timely and effective regulatory action where sewage management systems are failing and/or causing pollution.
- 4.3. Environment & Health Protection Guidelines OnSite Management for Single Households –
- (a) Maintain that effective Council regulation of sewage management systems requires a planned risk management approach.
 - (b) Address issues such as regulatory frameworks, the development of strategies (such as Council's "Onsite Wastewater Management Strategy"), administration and operational issues, site assessment principles and principles for selection and operation of sewage management systems.
 - (c) Are specified guidelines for the purposes the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* (NSW) reg 29, 44, 45.
 - (d) Are a matter for consideration by the Council in relation to applications for approval to install and approval to operate a sewage management system.

5. Assigning a Risk Rating to a System

- 5.1. Risk-ratings will be assigned by considering the risk of the area in which the system is located against the performance of the system.
- 5.2. Once the delegated Council officer has inspected a system, an 'onsite sewage management system risk matrix' will be applied.
- 5.3. Systems are classified High, Medium and Low Risk according to the potential environmental or health risk they pose.
- 5.4. The main considerations in determining the risk category include:
- (a) Location and size of block of land (such as, village allotments and farms);
 - (b) System design, condition and observed performance;
 - (c) Hydraulic load generated by activities
 - (d) Soil type;
 - (e) Vegetation coverage;
 - (f) Slope of land in application area;
 - (g) Distance to watercourses, drains and property boundaries; and
 - (h) Surface or subsurface discharge of effluent.

6. Inspection Program

- 6.1. Council will implement a strategic inspection program, to ensure a systematic and ongoing management and monitoring of onsite wastewater management systems.
- 6.2. Inspections will be conducted on a risk-based assessment as outlined in clause 3.
- 6.3. All onsite systems will be inspected once upon installation.

- 6.4. 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.
- 6.5. An initial inspection is required to assign a risk rating to each individual system, to issue the appropriate approvals, and to update Council's OnSite Wastewater Management System Register.
- 6.6. 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

7. Fees and Charges

- 7.1. Fees for inspections of new system installations and the initial Approval to Operate are included in the fees for Applications to Install.
- 7.2. Council's inspection program fees are charged in accordance with Council's Schedule of Fees and Charges as outlined in the current Operational Plan (available on Council's website).
- 7.3. Fees collected will contribute to (but not limited to) the following requirements of the program:
 - (a) Maintenance of an "Onsite Wastewater Management System" register;
 - (b) An Inspection Program in accordance with the criteria set out in this strategy;
 - (c) Administrative support including correspondence and enquiry support;
 - (d) Strategy review and upgrading as required;
 - (e) Ongoing education of system owners; and
 - (f) Policy/strategy amendment as required by legislation.
- 7.4. Fees will be shown as a service charge on annual rate notices for all properties listed on Council's "Onsite Wastewater Management" register.
- 7.5. Fees for follow-up inspections may be charged if continued non-compliance occurs.
- 7.6. Fees are charged to cover the cost of providing the service which Council is required to provide by law.

8. Complaints

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

9. Review

- 9.1. This policy will be reviewed within 12 months of an Ordinary Council Election or such other time on an as-needs basis.

References

- *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW).
- *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* (NSW).
- *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* (NSW).
- Environment and Health Protection Guidelines Onsite Sewage Management for Single Households 1998.
- AS/NZS 1547:2012 Onsite Domestic Wastewater Management.
- NSW Guidelines for Urban and Residential Use of Reclaimed Water (NSW Recycled Water Coordination Committee).
- Environmental Guidelines for the Reuse of Effluent in Irrigation (Department of Environment and Conservation).
- NSW Health's Greywater Reuse in Sewered Single Domestic Premises.
- Narrabri Shire Council's Local Approvals Policy – If Narrabri Shire Council's OnSite Wastewater Management Policy is inconsistent with Narrabri Shire Council's Local Approvals Policy, the latter shall prevail, and the former shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be invalid.

History

Minute Number	Meeting Date	Description of Change
241/2014	April 15, 2014	Adopted
164/2017	August 15, 2017	Reviewed
	August 31, 2021	Rebranded
336/2022	October 18, 2022	Endorsed for Public Exhibition
362/2022	November 22, 2022	Adopted