

15. ECO-INFO – SEPTIC ✓ SAFE
PROTECT YOUR HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT YOUR
SEWAGE MANAGEMENT APPROVAL
August 2000

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(Note: This information is for your assistance. It does not form part of the Sewage Management Approval)

Your Sewage Management (Operating) Approval has been issued in response to the application lodged with Council to operate your system. The approval requires compliance with conditions including the performance standards and an Operation and Maintenance Plan.

The application is to be renewed prior this date with certification on the system's performance from either Council or a suitably qualified person acceptable to Council. An explanation of the performance standards and a summary of Council's On-site Sewage Management Strategy is given in this fact sheet.

THE PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

An explanation of the performance standards is given below.

Protection of community amenity

Systems must be operated and maintained so they do not unreasonably interfere with the quality of life and where possible, so that they add to the local amenity. Special consideration is to be given to aesthetics, odours, dust, vectors, and excessive noise. Think of the impact your system may be having on your neighbours.

Protection of surface and groundwaters

Systems should be operated and maintained so that surface waters, waterways and groundwaters are not contaminated by any flow from treatment systems and land application areas (including effluent, rainfall run-off, and groundwater flow).

Prevention of public health risk involves

- preventing the spread of disease by micro-organisms
- preventing the spread of foul odours
- the discouragement of insects and vermin
- ensuring that persons do not come into contact with sewage or effluent (whether

- treated or not) in their ordinary activities on their premises

Sewage contains bacteria, viruses, parasites and other disease carrying organisms. Contact with effluent should be minimised or eliminated, particularly for children. Resurfacing absorption trenches are a significant public health risk and need to be rectified.

Areas being used for surface irrigation from aerated treatment plants (e.g. Envirocycle, Earthsafe, Gardenmaster systems, etc), are to be non recreation garden or turfed areas that discourage entry of persons with either perimeter landscaping, fencing, barriers and defined garden borders or edging. Council is encouraging larger areas for irrigation to remove nutrients and pollutants through evaporation and transpiration by plants and grasses. Effluent warning signs need to be displayed adjacent to these areas.

Protection of lands including soils and vegetation

Systems must not cause deterioration of land and vegetation quality through soil structure degradation, salinisation, waterlogging, chemical contamination or soil erosion.

Many native species are intolerant to high nutrient and effluent levels from land application systems.

WHAT IS SEPTIC SAFE?

Septic ✓ Safe is a local community health program designed to identify inefficient septic systems in our community and help people keep their systems working well. Septic ✓ Safe is a partnership between the NSW Department of Local Government and Council.

Refer to the Septic ✓ Safe brochure enclosed in the information pack for further details.

COUNCILS ON-SITE SEWAGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Council established a Community Working Group in response to residents widespread concern over the introduction of the NSW Government's reforms that required existing owners to obtain an approval to operate a system from Council.

The Working Group and Council staff developed an On-site Sewage Management Strategy that was adopted in December 1999 and sets the approach to implementing the reforms in the Shire.

The Strategy includes -

- Programs for environmental planning, auditing system performance, registration of service providers, system and water quality monitoring, training and education.
- A program of system audits, to complement fee for service inspections, at no charge to the property owners.
- Implementation of a system of registration and protocol for service providers undertaking inspection of systems as well as servicing aerated systems.
- Education and training to include Council issuing Sewage Management (Operating) Approvals with a self assessment trouble shooting guide and information pack.
- Performance standards to apply for the installation and operation of on-site sewage management systems.
- A risk analysis which sets the frequency of renewal of the Sewage Management Approval to be between one and five years. This includes high, medium and low risk categories based on a number of environment and public health criteria. Certification of the system by Council or a competent person will be required prior to renewal of the approval.
- Systems that have been installed to comply with Council's current Development Control Plan, have been satisfactorily finalised and comply with the performance standards will be categorised as no higher than medium risk.
- Financial assistance to owners for upgrades and repairs in cases of genuine hardship.
- Encouraging inspection and rectification of systems at property sale. 149(5) Certificate notations have been placed on affected properties alerting purchasers to have systems inspected prior to property sale.
- Council will provide assistance to owners to develop solutions for poorly performing systems to achieve the objectives of the regulations and associated guidelines.
- No blanket mandatory Council inspections. Under legislation, and reflected in your Sewage Management Approval, Council is obliged to advise you that the system may be inspected at any reasonable time and potentially the number of inspections involved. Prior notice of any inspection will be normally

given. Inspections will apply with an inspection fee in circumstances where -

- ⇒ Landowners request Council to have systems inspected as a fee for service.
- ⇒ An application for Approval to Operate was not lodged within 14 days from June 30 1999.
- ⇒ An inspection is requested at property sale.
- ⇒ An aerated system owner does not have a current service contract.
- ⇒ Council is aware that a serious risk to the environment and public health exists.
- ⇒ Council receives a legitimate complaint that effluent run-off is affecting a third party.
- ⇒ A system owner fails to renew their Sewage Management Approval.
- ⇒ Council has information that a sub-catchment or area is being, or suspected to be, impacted by water pollution from human wastewater and poses a serious public health risk.

Council can provide an inspection of your system and a qualified written report on its performance. The fee for inspection is currently \$103.00 (2000/01). Recommendations on system performance will be made to ensure it complies with the performance standards of the regulations and your Sewage Management Approval. You may contact Council's Customer Service Centre on (02) 4350 5555 to arrange an inspection.

More information can be obtained from additional Eco-info sheets:

- Your Septic System
- Your Aerated Wastewater Treatment System
- Your Composting Toilet
- Your Land Application Area
- Options for On-site Sewage Management

The Department of Local Government has issued Guidelines to assist Councils, home owners, developers and others. These Guidelines are called "Environment and Health Protection Guidelines - On-site Sewage Management for Single Households". They are available from Accounts Branch, Department of Local Government, Locked Bag 1500, Bankstown NSW 2200 for \$30 or accessible on the Internet on: <http://www.dlg.nsw.gov.au/on-site.htm>

This information package has been assisted by the New South Wales Government through the 'Septic✓Safe' On-site Sewage Management Program administered by the Department of Local Government.

For further information, please contact Council's Customer Service Centre on (02) 4350 5555.

To the Septic System Owner

This information pack contains your Sewage Management (Operating) Approval which has been issued in response to the application lodged with Council to operate your system. The information pack includes -

- Your **Sewage Management Approval** with its Operation and Maintenance Plan.
- A **Sewage Management Log Book** that can be used to record maintenance of your system, store your approval, service records, and any information relating to your approval. Council is encouraging you to use the Log Book as a useful record for owners, and service providers, as well as purchasers if the property ownership is transferred in the future.
- A **kitchen sink strainer** to help reduce the amount of kitchen scraps and waste entering your system. Council is encouraging the use of kitchen sink strainers as a simple tool to improve the performance of systems, prevent drainage systems from blocking and prolong the life of soil based absorption trenches.
- A system specific **Eco-info** fact sheet that includes a **self assessment trouble shooting guide** to enable you to undertake a self assessment of your system's performance and to take steps to ensure that any problems are rectified.
- **Eco-info No 20 Options for On-site Sewage Management Systems** is a summary of information on system options with methods to improve the performance of existing systems. It includes information on sodium and phosphorus levels in laundry and washing powders as well as basic tips to maintain your system. It can assist owners to choose the right system for their property and needs.
- **Eco-info No 15 Your Sewage Management Approval** gives details of the meaning of the performance standards that your system must comply with under the new laws and a summary of Council's On-site Sewage Management Strategy.
- A **Septic ✓ Safe brochure** outlining the program.

Council will be issuing a renewal application prior to the expiry date on your approval. You are to renew the application prior this date and enclose certification on the system's performance from either Council or a suitably qualified person acceptable to Council.

Should you require any further information please contact Council's Customer Service Centre on (02) 4350 5555.

Yours faithfully

Peter Birch
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER