

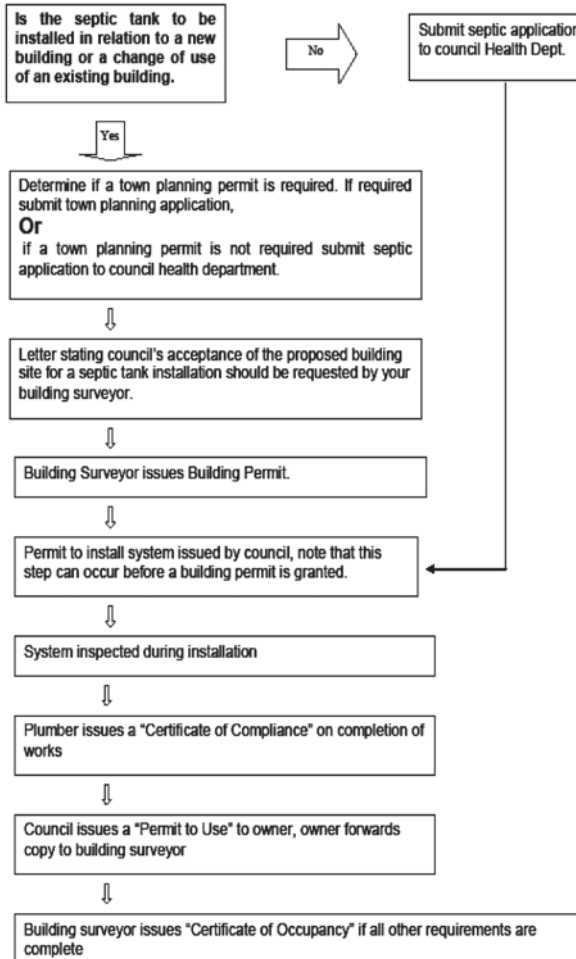
## Regulations

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is responsible for approving the different types of septic treatment systems that can be installed in Victoria. For a list of approved systems and servicing conditions that apply to them, access the following weblink.

<http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/water/wastewater/onsite.asp>

- Local councils are responsible for approving the installation or alteration of septic tank systems that process less than 5000 litres of waste water per day.
- The council will issue a 'Permit to Use' for the system after works are completed.
- The installation/alteration of onsite sewage management systems, including plumbing and drainage, should only be carried out by a licensed plumber.
- The plumber must issue a 'Certificate of Compliance' for works valued more than \$500.
- Since 1985 all waste water must be disposed off within the property boundaries.
- Traditional septic tanks must be pumped out (desludged) every three years.
- AWTS systems should be serviced every three months or as required by the EPA.
- Sand filters must have their output effluent tested for quality every year.

Flow chart to demonstrate the process for the installation of a septic tank



### Questions?

*Our friendly staff look forward to helping you.*

**Colac Otway Shire Council**

**2-6 Rae Street, Colac VIC**

**P: 03) 5232 9400**

**E: [inq@colacotway.vic.gov.au](mailto:inq@colacotway.vic.gov.au)**

**W: [www.colacotway.vic.gov.au](http://www.colacotway.vic.gov.au)**

# Managing Waste Water On Your Property

## Types of Septic Systems



**Colac Otway**  
SHIRE

Photograph by Alan Charmichael

# Managing Waste Water On Your Property

## Onsite Sewage Management Systems

If you occupy a house that is not connected to the main sewer, then chances are your yard contains an on-site sewage management system. If this is the case, then you have a special responsibility to ensure that it is working properly.

The aim of this brochure is to introduce you to the most popular types of on-site sewage management systems and provide some general information to help you maintain your system effectively.

You should find out what type of system you have and how it works by contacting your local council.

Poorly maintained on-site sewage systems can significantly affect you and your family's health, as well as the environment, and will shorten the life of your system.

### What is an on-site sewage management system?

An on-site system comprises various tanks and treatment and disposal components that allow you to treat and utilise all of your waste water (not stormwater) within the property boundaries.

Waste water can be blackwater (toilet waste), greywater (sullage water from showers, sinks and washing machines) or a combination of both.

## An on-site sewage system has two functions

- Treatment of waste water to a certain quality or standard.
- Disposal of the resultant effluent to a dedicated area of land. The method of disposal depends on the quality of the effluent and can be done using various methods.

### Traditional septic tanks

A traditional septic tank has two compartments and treats both grey and blackwater. Bacteria in the tank breaks down the solids over a period of time and the final effluent which is considered contaminated must be disposed of below ground in trenches for health safety reasons.

### Aerated Wastewater Treatment Systems (AWTS)

AWTS have several treatment compartments. The first acts like a septic tank, but in the second air is mixed with the waste water to assist bacteria to more effectively break down solids. A third compartment allows the settling of solids and a final chlorination tank allows for disinfection. The final effluent can be irrigated above ground if disinfected, or irrigated subsoil (under mulch) if not.

### Sand filters

Sand filters are usually fitted to the end of a traditional septic tank and work by filtering the effluent through a special sand. The final result is an effluent similar in quality to an AWTS and has the same restrictions in regards to the disposal to an irrigation field.

## Composting toilets

Composting toilets can collect and treat toilet waste only. Grey water from the washing machine, shower and sinks must be treated separately, for example in a septic tank or other approved system. The compost produced must be disposed of properly which is usually buried on-site.

## Worm Farms

Worm farms replace the internal workings of a septic tank with a worm pile and filter similar to the small domestic worm farms for kitchen scraps. The worm farm accepts both greywater and blackwater and produces an effluent better than a traditional septic tank but inferior to an AWTS or sand filter. The effluent must be disposed of via an underground trench system but a reduction of 25 percent in length is allowed due to worm action in the surrounding soil.

## Choice of System

Your choice of system depends on:

- the size of the block
- the porosity of the soil
- slope of the land
- landslip risk potential
- closeness of any stream or watercourse
- if you are inside a water catchment area.

**Council must approve any septic system or alteration before works are started.**