Mount Alexander Shire Council

SEPTIC TANK INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE GUIDE

1. PERMITS AND APPROVALS

Before installing, altering or using any septic tank system a permit must be obtained from Council. The system must be constructed, installed and maintained in accordance with:

1 The current edition of the EPA's Septic Tank Code of Practice
2 Environment Protection Act 1970
3 EPA Certificates of Approval
4 Australian/New Zealand Standard 1547 *On-site domestic-wastewater management* and Australian/New Zealand Standard 3500 *National plumbing and drainage code* and other relevant Australian Standards
5 Council Guidelines
6 See Section12 for further information on when a Permit to Alter an existing system is required.

2. PLANNING APPROVAL

- If a Planning Permit is required, your Septic Tank Permit cannot be issued until the Planning Permit has been issued.
- Please contact the Planning Department on (03) 54711 700 to enquire if a Planning Permit is required or to enquire on the progress of your Planning Application if already submitted.
- Conditions on your Planning Permit may require you to install a particular system, please read your Planning Permit carefully.
- If you have already obtained a Planning Permit, a copy of the Planning Permit should be submitted with your application.

3. INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR PERMISSION TO INSTALL APPLICATION

- Address of site of proposed installation
- Owner's Name, Current Postal Address & Phone Number
- Plumber / Contractor's Name and Address & Phone Number
- Plumber / Contractor's Licence No.
- Type of Premises (house, shop etc.)
- System type and tank capacity (litres)
- Disposal Process.
- List of fixtures to be connected. (Sinks, WC's, Baths, Basins, Troughs, Showers, Dishwashers, Spas etc)
- A Land Capability Assessment may be required to be submitted with the application. See Section 11. Land Capability Assessment.
- **If a Permit to Install has been issued and the applicant wishes to change the system to be installed, a Permit to Alter a Septic Permit application must be submitted.**

4. PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

SITE PLAN

A site plan is to be enclosed with your application showing:

1. The location of the premises including the street number or lot number and street name.
2. The dimensions of all boundaries and the location of all other streets and laneways which abut the property (show names if applicable).
3. The locations and dimensions of all buildings or proposed buildings, surface water occurrences (dams and creeks), water tanks, swimming pools, excavations, driveways, stormwater drains, water pipes and existing tank systems and underground power, water and telecommunications connections. On hilly sites, an indication of surface runoff paths is also required.
4. The location of the proposed septic tank or treatment plant, & effluent disposal system (including irrigation lines).
5. The position & direction of north.
6. Fall of the land.

Please note: Once a permit has been obtained, the planned effluent disposal field should be protected to prevent deterioration by building activities or vehicular traffic.

5. PLUMBING AND DRAINAGE

All sanitary and drainage work – including the installation of fixtures, fittings, pipes, effluent irrigation systems or other appliances used with any septic system – must be in accordance with the current EPA Code of Practice and the most recent version of Australia/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 1547: Onsite domestic wastewater management. A licensed plumber must carry out all this work.

6. TYPES OF SYSTEMS

There are two [2] main types of systems that are installed in the Mount Alexander Shire Council:
1 Conventional septic tanks and soil absorption trenches
2 AWTS Type (Packaged Sewerage Treatment Plants) and subsurface irrigation
Only those systems approved for use by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria can be installed in Victoria. These systems are designed for domestic wastewater flows of less than 5000 litres per day.

For more information on systems available please refer to the onsite wastewater treatment systems information on the EPA website. www.epa.vic.gov.au

7. INSTALLATION, INSPECTIONS AND USE OF SEPTIC SYSTEMS

After the **Application to Install/Alter a Septic Tank** has been submitted to Council, a preliminary site inspection is required prior to the commencement of works.

INSTALLATION MAY TAKE PLACE WHEN COUNCIL ISSUES A "PERMIT TO INSTALL A SEPTIC SYSTEM".

- Absorption Trenches and Septic Tanks are to be inspected before backfilling or sections should be left open to satisfy the relevant inspection.
- AWTS (Treatment Plants) require inspection prior to backfilling.
- A "Certificate of Approval to Use" under the Building Regulations must be issued for a septic system before the "Occupancy Permit" can be issued for a dwelling.
- Under the Environment Protection Act 1970, Septic Systems cannot be used until a "Certificate to Use" has been issued.

Where additional inspections are required due to non-compliance an additional inspection fee may be incurred.

8. SPA BATHS

Spa baths are not suitable due to large volumes of water that will disrupt the operation of the septic system. Septic Tanks require retention of contents to ensure sufficient anaerobic digestion takes place in the primary process. A separate septic tank system is required where spas of over 200 litres capacity are to be installed.

9. PENALTIES

There are serious offences listed under the Environmental Protection Act 1970: Part 9B – Septic Tank Systems:
(1) A person must not construct, install or alter a septic tank system unless the person holds a permit.
Penalty = $47,571.00.
(2) A person must comply with a permit and any conditions to which it is subject. Penalty = $19,028.40
(3) A septic tank system must not be used until the municipal council has inspected the septic tank system and issued a certificate approving its use. Penalty = $19,028,40
(4) An occupier of premises on which a septic tank is located must maintain it in accordance with the requirements specified in the permit issued by the municipal council for that septic tank system.
Penalty = $1,585.70
Penalties current as at 1 July 2017 -30 June 2018

10. MINIMUM SETBACK DISTANCES FROM WASTEWATER DISPOSAL FIELDS

Setback distances apply for septic system installation where existing farm dams and surface waters are to be considered when designing the layout of the proposed system.

1 Farm Dams – Minimum setback of 60 metres.
2 6 metres on the upslope of any building.
3 3 metres on the down slope of any building.
4 6 metres on the upslope of adjacent Lot.
5 3 metres on the down slope of adjacent Lot.
6 3 metres from water supply pipe.
7 300 metres on the upslope from a potable supply channel.
8 20 metres on the down slope from a potable supply channel.
9 3 metres from gas.
10 15 metres from underground water tank
11 6 metres from a storm water drain.
12 6 metres from a swimming pool.
13 15 metres from any cutting/escarpment at which the effluent is likely to emerge.
14 300 metres on the upslope from a dam or reservoir (potable, including food production)
15 60 metres on the upslope from a dam or reservoir (stock & non-potable)
16 60 metres on the upslope from a stream or channel (continuous or ephemeral, non-potable)
17 100 metres on the upslope from a stream (Potable Water Supply Catchment).
18 20 metres from groundwater and bore (potable or non-potable).
19 6 metres from children's grassed playground
20 1.5 metres vertical depth from base of tank to the highest seasonal water table

Some setback distances may be reduced where conditions specified in the current version of the EPA Code of Practice can be met however the setback from a waterway cannot be reduced in a special catchment area.

Please Note: Flood-prone land is unsuitable for on-site disposal of effluent.

11. LAND CAPABILITY ASSESSMENTS

LAND CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT

Code of Practice – Onsite Wastewater Management - Publication 891.3 2013 requirements:

LCA is mandatory for any allotment within a Special Water Supply Catchment Area. See section 3.6 of the Code for further information.
The level of information required for each development will vary, please contact the Environmental Health Officer for further information. A LCA undertaken at the time of subdivision may be sufficient. The LCA must be undertaken by a suitably qualified soil science professional.
The most recent versions of EPA publication 746, *Land capability assessment for onsite domestic wastewater management* and Australia/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS1547, On-site domestic wastewater management set out further parameters

Please Note: **It is not the task of the EPA or Council to undertake assessments on behalf of developers or individual landowners. The applicant should arrange for this work to be carried out. Consultants can be found in the Yellow Pages under Environmental Consultants or Soil Testing & Investigation.**

12. PERMITS TO ALTER AN EXISTING SYSTEM

A permit to alter a septic tank system must be obtained for any works proposed to on an existing septic tank system or fixtures that form part of the system. This may include additional fixtures within the existing dwelling. Alterations to the irrigation/disposal areas also require a Permit to Alter.

Major alterations as described in the application form include replacement or relocation of septic tank, treatment plant, sand filter, effluent dispersal system or any component of the septic tank system, or the installation of extra trenches/irrigation (may be required for dwelling extensions).
Minor alterations include alterations to internal plumbing and/or inlet to the septic tank system. Installation, replacement or relocation of the internal plumbing, fixtures, fittings, appliances.

13. FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information on specific septic systems, please visit the EPA website www.epa.vic.gov.au and go to Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems.

Mount Alexander Shire Council
Postal Address:
PO Box 185
CASTLEMAINE VIC 3450
Telephone: (03) 5471 1700

Healthy Environments Department
27 Lyttleton Street
CASTLEMAINE VIC 3450

14. BOOKING INSPECTIONS

Inspection bookings must be made at least 48 hours in advance. Please contact a customer services officer on (03) 5471 1700 so that they can direct you to the appropriate Environmental Health Officer to arrange an inspection time.

INDEMNITY
Normal contract conditions between the owner and/or builder and plumber apply in respect of liability.

Please note: Applications must be fully completed. If an application form is submitted without adequate information it will be returned.

Mount Alexander Shire Council

Septic Tank Planting Guide

WHAT TO PLANT OVER YOUR TRENCHES	
COMMON NAME	BOTANICAL NAME
SMALL TREES / TALL SHRUBS	
_ Sticky Wattle	_ *Acacia howittii*
_ Crimson Bottlebrush	_ *Callistemon citrinus*
_ Scarlet Bottlebrush	_ *Callistemon macropunctatus*
_ Wooley Tea-tree	_ *Leptospermum lanigerum*
_ Cross leaf Honey myrtle	_ *Melaleuca decussate*
_ Swamp Paperbark	_ *Melaleuca ericifolia*
_ Salt Paperbark	_ *Melaleuca halmaturorum*
SHRUBS	
_ Flowering Tamarisk	_ *Tamarix juniperina*
_ Cannas	_ *Eleocharis acuta*
_ Common fishbone fern	
_ Common Spike-rush	
_ Geranium	
_ Hederas	
_ Hydrangeas	

WHAT TO PLANT OVER 2 METRES AWAY FROM YOUR TRENCHES	
COMMON NAME	**BOTANICAL NAME**
_ Western Coastal Wattle	_ *Acacia Cyclops*
_ Swallow Wattle	_ *Acacia longifolia*
_ Wirilda	_ *Acacia retinoides*
_ Weeping Bottlebrush	_ *Callistemon viminalis*
_ Lilac Bottlebrush	_ *Callistemon lilacinus*
_ Bell-fruit Mallee	_ *Eucalyptus pressiana*
_ Willow leaf Hakea	_ *Hakea saligna*
_ Weeping Pittosporum	_ *Pittosporum phylliraeoides*

WHAT NOT TO PLANT OVER YOUR TRENCHES	
COMMON NAME	**BOTANICAL NAME**
_ River Red Gum	_ *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*
_ Lemon Scented Gum	_ *Eucalyptus citriodora*
_ Claret Ash	_ *Fraxinus raywoodi*
_ Sugar Gum	_ *Eucalyptus cladocalyx*
_ Plane Tree	_ *Platanus – all species*
_ Poplar	_ *Populus nigra, etc*
_ Weeping Willow	_ *Salix babylonica, etc*

DOC/12/75166
Updated 14 July 2017

Care and Operation of Septic Tank Systems

- Odours may occur on installation or after addition of large quantity of germicide. If this occurs, flush a cup of lime down the toilet each day until odours abate.
- Restrict the use of germicides (such as strong detergents, disinfectants, toilet cleaners and bleaches), as they will kill the bacteria which makes the septic work.
- Use soapy water to clean toilets and other fixtures
- Use only detergents that have low alkaline salts and chlorine levels.
- Use of proprietary or chemical additives is not recommended at any time for septic systems – except for lime used as outlined above.
- Do not flush sanitary napkins or disposable nappies down the system. Minimise the amounts of oil and fat flushed into the system.
- Use a sink strainer to restrict food scraps entering the septic system. Do not use garbage disposal units.
- Fill tank with water to reduce odours on start up or after de-sludging tanks. They should not be washed or disinfected after de-sludging.
- Ensure the tank and disposal field are not built over or disturbed.
- Inspect the system at least annually and desludge the tank at least once every three years, or as otherwise directed by the Council.

Maintenance Checklist for Septic Tank Systems

- Keep a record of all maintenance (including tank pump-outs and the location of the system, tank inspection and access openings) and send copies of the maintenance reports to the local council in accordance with the septic tank permit and Certificate of Approval.
- Do not add to or alter any part of your system without Council approval.
- Ensure that only suitably trained persons work on the system.
- Check sludge level, pumps and alarms regularly.
- Arrange for an inspection of the system, at least annually.
- Pump-out the tank in accordance with the permit conditions.