

Forrest Wastewater Audit Findings

Visioning Workshop
12 December 2017



Domestic Waste Water Management Plan

- Council required to develop a Domestic Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) under State legislation:
 - To assist with the management of on-site disposal of effluent (where land is not connected to a reticulated sewerage system)
 - Establish preferred approaches to monitoring the condition and management of on-site effluent treatment systems, enforcement, and direction for planning decisions
- Council adopted its DWMP in 2015



Waste Water System Audits

- Important step under DWMP is for Shire to carry out system audits - inspections of existing domestic waste water systems throughout the Shire
- These audits provide evidence of how individual systems are performing and inform of common issues across a settlement
- The audits gather a range of data relating to land-use (residential - holiday rental – commercial), operation, design, size, locality and performance of systems



Forrest Waste Water Audits

- Forrest township has been prioritised for auditing as part of the DWMP implementation program
- Information gained will inform the Forrest Waste Water Investigation project.
- The investigation has come about from the advocacy by the community who identified waste water as a high priority for the township



Audits Scope

- 113 properties were audited in Forrest township over 4 weeks
- Findings have been categorized into three risk ratings: High, Medium and Low.
- Properties were found to have a range of different systems and disposal methods including sand filters, AWTs, outhouses, urine separating, split system and standard all waste systems disposing to offsite discharge, absorption trenches, surface and sub surface irrigation.



Outcomes

- Large number of properties are not retaining waste water on site & are discharging to the environment (ie. drains or waterways)
- A large number of systems appear to have been altered/installed without Council approval & do not meet regulatory requirements
- A large number of properties are not having service/ water tests undertaken or desludging of systems, resulting in the failing of disposal fields
- Buildings constructed over existing systems is significantly impacting the ability to service, desludge and maintain them.
- Increasing tourist accommodation & commercial actives resulting in over loading of existing systems at peak times of the year.



Findings

- Risk ratings based on the DWMP framework, dependent on the risk they pose to both public health and the environment.
- High risk rating = systems that are non compliant and result in offsite discharge of both Black water and Grey water and are not serviced, water tested or desludged.
- Medium risk rating = systems that discharge only grey water offsite and may retain black water onsite and are not serviced, water tested or desludged.
- Low risk rating = systems that are retaining waters onsite but require servicing or desludging and have minor non compliance



Findings

Risk Rating	Numbers
High	39
Medium	21
Low	31
Unknown	20
OHS	12
Total audits conducted	113



What does this mean?

- Whilst high level of non-compliance identified, it simply recognises a condition that has existed for several years
- Council will need to work with land owners on high priority risks to address public health/nuisance
- Audit results are significant input to discussions on wastewater treatment options for Forrest
 - Will help inform direction of current project
 - Help community understand the extent of current problem



Brochure

Help protect your health and the environment

Poorly maintained septic systems are a serious source of water pollution, may present health risks and cause odour and vermin problems.

By looking after your septic system you can do your part in helping to protect the environment and the health of your family.

Management of the treated water from your septic system is your responsibility.

WARNING SIGNS

You can look for the following warning signs that signal there are troubles with your septic system

- Water that drains too slowly
- Drain pipes that gurgle when air bubbles are forced back through the system
- Sewage smells
- Water backing up to your sink
- Waste water surfacing / pooling in the yard.
- Collapsed or sunken drainage trenches

Immediate attention will protect your health, the environment and ultimately save you money.

Do's and Dont's

- Do** Grow suitable plants over the drainage field
Contact Shire Office for advice.
- Do** Have the septic pumped out (desludged) every three years
- Do** Keep records of inspections and maintenance
- Do** Practice water conservation
- Do** Repair leaking taps and toilets immediately

- Don't** Use bleaches and cleaning products excessively
- Don't** Allow oil or grease to enter the system
- Don't** Allow storm water to discharge into a septic system or over a drainage field
- Don't** Cover the drainage field with paving concrete or buildings or other structures.
- Don't** Place non-biodegradable objects into the system

Questions? Our friendly staff look forward to helping you.

Colac Otway Shire Council
2-6 Rae Street, Colac VIC
P: 03) 5232 9400
E: info@colacotway.vic.gov.au
W: www.colacotway.vic.gov.au

Waste Water Your Septic System

Photograph by Alan Charnichael


Colac Otway
SHIRE

