



Frequently asked Questions

What is an “approval to operate”?

Operating a system of sewage management is a prescribed activity under *section 68(F10) of the Local Government Act 1993 and clause 45 of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005*. This means that an approval to operate a system of sewage management **must** be obtained from the local council.

Approval to operate a system of sewage management requires the landowner to take all reasonable steps to minimise transmission of disease, pollution of water and degradation of land as a result of sewage management activity and requires that the landowner inform the Council about those activities and pay fees to contribute to the Council's costs of managing the cumulative impact of sewage pollution.

Is Council approval required for existing systems?

Landowners with any type of on-site sewage management system are required to obtain a council approval to operate. Councils are entitled to charge a fee to cover the cost of registration and assessment.

There are two approvals required regarding on-site sewage systems:

1. An approval to **install** the system – this would have been obtained from Council when the system was first installed; and
2. An approval to **operate** the system – this was first required in 1996 and is an on-going requirement to make an application and have the system approved to operate.

Why should on-site sewage system owners have to pay council for an approval?

Most of the costs of operating an on-site sewage management system are borne by the landowner or resident, but the Council is responsible for supervision and environmental management.

Residents in sewerred areas pay for supervision and environmental management through sewerage charges, which include load based EPA licence fees and other environmental management costs. This program, known as Septic Safe, provides monitoring and assurance of water quality, better control of effluent discharge, supervision of plumbers and service agents, education programs and practical support to assist landowners.

What if I don't fill in the form?

You will be still charged the \$60.00 on your rates and your property will be placed on the priority list for inspection.

What if I can't fill the form out?

You make a time to visit Council's Church Street officers and meet with a staff member will be able to assist. Alternatively you may make arrangements for a suitable time for Council Officer to

visit your property assist in completing the form and provide advice on the operation of the existing system.

What if there are more than one (1) system on my place?

You will only be charged one (1) fee regardless of the number of systems installed on the property providing they are on one (1) rate notice.

When completing the form there is provision for information on up to three (3) systems on the form. If you have more than (3) on-site systems on your property you will need to discuss with one of Council's technical officers who will assist in completing the form.

Will council be inspecting my OSS?

Council will be undertaking inspections of all systems within the local government area. Depending on the risk category of the system this could be as frequent as every two years for a high risk system or five years for a low risk system. For definitions of risk category please contact Councils Inspection staff or view Councils On-site sewage strategy at www.gisc.nsw.gov.au

Council staff will be advising owners and making suitably convenient times to carry out inspections.

How much will the inspections cost?

Council is not proposing to charge an inspection fee at this point in time.

Why do we need our On-Site Sewage Management System inspected?

Recent studies conducted in NSW show that around 70% of septic systems are failing across the state. These systems need to be monitored and action taken to protect public health and the environment.

What happens if my system is not working correctly?

Failing systems are a threat to our health and the environment. If your system is failing, a Council Officer will work with you to identify the reasons for the failure and will help you rectify the problem.

I own an Aerated Wastewater Treatment System (AWTS) which I get serviced on a quarterly basis by a qualified contractor. Do I require a Council Operational Approval?

Under Section 68 of the Local Government Act all systems including AWTS require an operational approval from Council. Past inspections of AWTS have shown that a number are not operating in a satisfactory manner. The inspections carried out by Council Officers are different from the maintenance inspections carried out by qualified contractors. Council Officers assess the potential risk that your system has on public health and the environment.