

**FILE NO: PSC2013-00406-049**

**TITLE: ON-SITE SEWAGE MANAGEMENT POLICY**

**OWNER: DEVELOPMENT & COMPLIANCE SECTION MANAGER**

**1. PURPOSE:**

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide Council with a formal framework for the management and regulation of on-site sewage systems in the Port Stephens local government area (LGA).

**2. CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:**

2.1 Within the Port Stephens LGA there are approximately 4800 on-site sewage management systems. The effective and successful management of domestic, commercial and industrial wastewater systems within the un-sewered areas of Port Stephens is a non-discretionary role of Council to ensure protection of the area's pristine waterways, preserve the diverse environment, maintain public health and mitigate the risk to public health.

2.2 The Local Government Act 1993 and subordinate regulation are the key legislative instruments utilised for regulation of these systems.

2.3 All owners and operators of functioning on-site sewage management systems are required to obtain an 'Approval to Operate' for each system (annually or otherwise determined based on risk). Additionally, the installation, alteration or construction of a new on-site sewage management system is an activity that requires the prior approval of Council.

2.4 Council first adopted an On-Site Sewage Management Policy in 1999 with subsequent reviews in 2004, 2012, 2016 and 2019. The policy should be read in conjunction with Councils On-Site Sewage Management Guidelines (the guidelines) which clarify standard operating requirements for the effective management of existing and new on-site sewage management systems.

2.5 Key components of Councils On-Site Sewage Management Program include:

- a. approval to operate an on-site sewage management system.
- b. approval to install an on-site sewage management system.
- c. on-site sewage management system inspection program.
- d. education, advice and complaints.
- e. pollution and incident investigation.

- 2.6 This policy has been developed to define Council's role in the effective regulation of on-site sewage management systems in Port Stephens in order to preserve the area's waterways, community health and the environment. The policy supports a systematic approach to sustainable land use planning, site assessment, system design and installation and ensures accountability by owners and operators for the correct operation and maintenance of on-site sewage management systems.
- 2.7 The policy also assists Council in the prioritisation of resources for the efficient regulation and monitoring of on-site sewage management systems and facilitates coordinated data collection, system approval, monitoring and environmental assessment.
- 2.8 This policy recognises that Council has a non-discretionary role to consider the medium to long term impacts that on-site sewage management systems can have on the environment, public health, tourism and industry. The policy and associated guidelines have been developed with consideration to ecologically sustainable development principles, catchment management, productive re-use of resources and protection of public health. It is also recognised that the future development of land without access to reticulated sewer will continue and that this development can only be permitted with an appropriate level of planning and regulation by Council.
- 2.9 The policy and guidelines provide stakeholders with a clear framework for the consistent, timely and effective management of existing and proposed on-site sewage management systems in the un-sewered areas of Port Stephens. The community expectations regarding protection of the environment and waterways will be met through implementation of this policy.
- 2.10 For the majority of property owners, developers and installation companies seeking to develop land in areas identified as a low or medium risk (within the guidelines) this policy will provide a simpler, cost effective and timely process for submitting and receiving an approval for the installation of a system of sewage management.
- 2.11 The development of land or the installation of new systems in areas identified as high and very high hazard will be subject to a level of scrutiny commensurate with the prescribed hazard class. It has been shown that the appropriate management of developments involving on-site sewage management early in the development process provides better performance outcomes and minimises impacts.

### 3. SCOPE:

- 3.1 Council's non-discretionary role for the regulation of on-site sewage management systems involves those with a capacity to treat less than 2500 equivalent persons or <750kL per day or systems that are not operating under a licence issued by the NSW Environment Protection Authority. Council regulates all systems within the LGA except 4 sewage treatment plants (STPs) operated by the Hunter Water Corporation (HWC).

### 4. DEFINITIONS:

- 4.1 An outline of the key definitions of terms included in the policy.

Council	For the purposes of this policy refers to Port Stephens Council.
DCP	Development Control Plan within the meaning of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act.
Ecological Sustainable Development	Development that improves the quality of life, both now and for the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends.
LGA	Local Government Area.
On-site sewage management system	Any facility that stores, treats and/or disposes of sewage and wastewater on-site.

### 5. STATEMENT:

- 5.1 This policy applies to owners and operators of all permanent on-site sewage management systems in the Port Stephens LGA that do not directly discharge human effluent and trade wastes to a Hunter Water Corporation sewer and are not specifically regulated under an environment protection licence. The systems covered by this policy include a wide range of public, commercial, industrial and domestic sewage management facilities.

### 6. RESPONSIBILITIES:

- 6.1 Compliance Coordinator – reviewing the policy and effective implementation of PSC on-site sewage management guidelines.

## **7. RELATED DOCUMENTS:**

- 7.1 Port Stephens Council On-Site Sewage Management Policy Guidelines (2016)
- 7.2 Port Stephens Council On-Site Sewage Management Development Assessment Framework (DAF)
- 7.3 Port Stephens Council On-Site Sewage Management Technical Manual
- 7.4 Local Government Act 1993
- 7.5 Local Government (General) Regulations 2005
- 7.6 Protection of the Environment and Operations Act 1997
- 7.7 Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979

## CONTROLLED DOCUMENT INFORMATION:

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<b>Process owner</b>	Development and Compliance Section Manager		
<b>Author</b>	Compliance Coordinator		
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<b>Adoption date</b>	19 October 2004		

## VERSION HISTORY:

Version	Date	Author	Details	Minute No.
1	29/10/2004	Manager Environmental Services	Policy approved by Council	375
2	28/9/2012	Manager Development Assessment and Environmental Health	Policy amended	010
2.1	22/11/2016	Coordinator Environmental Health and Regulation	Clearer reference to associated guidelines and modified to new template.	339

Version	Date	Author	Details	Minute No.
3	26/11/2019	Coordinator Environmental Health and Compliance	<p>2.4 Council first adopted an On-Site Sewage Management Policy in 1999 with subsequent reviews in 2004, 2012 and 2016.</p> <p>2.7 The policy also assists Council in the prioritisation of resources for the efficient regulation and monitoring of on-site sewage management systems and facilitates coordinated data collection, system approval, monitoring and environmental assessment.</p> <p>3.1 Council's non-discretionary role for the regulation of on-site sewage management systems involves those with a capacity to treat less than 2500 equivalent persons or &lt;750kL per day or systems that are not operating under a licence issued by the NSW Environment Protection Authority. Council regulates all systems within the LGA except 4 sewage treatment plants (STPs) operated by the Hunter Water Corporation (HWC).</p> <p>5.1 This policy applies to owners and operators of all permanent on-site sewage management systems in the Port Stephens LGA that do not directly discharge human effluent and trade wastes to a Hunter Water Corporation sewer and are not specifically regulated under an environment protection licence.</p>	230

Version	Date	Author	Details	Minute No.
			<p>7.2 Port Stephens Council On-Site Sewage Management Development Assessment Framework (DAF).</p> <p>7.3 Port Stephens Council On-Site Sewage Management Technical Manual 2005.</p> <p>7.4 Local Government Act 1993.</p> <p>7.5 local government (general) regulations.</p>	
4	28/09/2021	Compliance Coordinator	2.4 added 'and 2019'	247