

FAQ: Draft Wastewater Management Plan

August 2026

What is the Onsite Wastewater Management Plan?

The new **Onsite Wastewater Management Plan (2026-2031)** replaces the previous plan developed in 2019. It helps Council and property owners better manage septic tanks and other onsite wastewater systems.

Why the change?

The draft plan outlines how Council and community can manage and reduce risks associated with onsite wastewater systems, including septic tanks and other treatment systems used on properties that are not connected to sewerage. This draft plan is about protecting our environment, supporting sustainable development and ensuring wastewater is managed safely now and into the future.



In simple terms:

The updated plan helps make sure septic systems and other onsite wastewater systems are managed safely, fairly and consistently across the Southern Grampians Shire, while protecting people, waterways and the environment for the future.

2019 DWMP

Established the local wastewater risk picture

Identified areas where septic systems may face challenges.

Operated under the previous environmental framework

Reflected the environmental rules and EPA guidance available at the time.

Used land capability, lot size and township risk assessments

Had general assessment requirements for new wastewater systems.

Applied a broadly common assessment approach

Identified townships and properties that may have higher wastewater risks.

Identified priority townships and legacy issues

Highlighted locations where small lots, older systems and known failures required closer attention.

Included an Action Plan for future work

Identified actions to improve Council's management of onsite wastewater over time.

2026-2031 OWMP

Builds risk into day-to-day decision making

Uses this information to help guide planning, permits, inspections and future decisions.

Reflects current legislation and guidance

Updated to meet current environmental laws and EPA requirements.

Uses risk information to guide the level of response

Provides clearer pathways and requirements for different types of developments.

Introduces clearer assessment pathways

Includes clearer actions for inspections, monitoring and addressing issues where needed.

Links priority areas to practical management responses

Supports inspection, rectification, data improvement, monitoring where justified and investigation of longer-term servicing options.

Strengthens implementation, reporting and review

Prioritises actions, tracks progress, records implementation barriers and reviews priorities over the life of the plan.

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The new OWMP does not affect every stakeholder in the same way. The main practical changes and responsibilities are summarised below.

2019 DWMP

Council:

Better management of wastewater system

The new plan gives Council clearer processes for assessing wastewater applications and managing higher-risk areas.

This helps ensure wastewater systems are managed fairly, consistently and in a way that protects public health and the environment.

Property owners and system operators:

What this means for you

If you have a septic tank or other onsite wastewater system, it's important to maintain it properly and fix any issues early. This helps keep your property, neighbours and local waterways safe.

Planners and building practitioners:

Clearer requirements for planning and building projects

The new framework makes it easier to identify when Environmental Health input, wastewater assessments or additional technical information will be needed. This supports more consistent and efficient decision-making.

Land capability assessors and wastewater designers: Clearer requirements for assessors and designers

The new framework provides clearer assessment pathways and reporting requirements. Suitable low and medium-risk domestic sites may be eligible for a simplified assessment process, while more complex proposals will still require detailed assessment. Reports should clearly document site conditions, system design, environmental risks and ongoing maintenance requirements.

A simpler pathway for suitable properties:

Some low-risk properties may be eligible for a simpler assessment process. This means less paperwork while still ensuring important checks are completed to protect public health and the environment.

In Simple Terms:

The updated plan uses a common-sense approach. Simpler, lower-risk projects can be assessed through clearer and more streamlined processes, while more complex sites will require additional assessment to help protect public health and the environment.

2026-2031 OWMP

Government agencies and water corporations: Working together for better outcomes

The new plan helps Council and other organisations work together to manage wastewater risks, protect waterways and plan for future growth in the community.

Developers:

Better planning for future development

The new plan encourages wastewater management to be considered early in the development process. Developers will need to show that wastewater can be managed safely and sustainably before subdivision or development plans are approved.

Installers and plumbers:

A simpler pathway for suitable sites

Some low and medium-risk domestic sites may be eligible for a simpler assessment process. This can reduce paperwork while maintaining clear requirements for system design and installation. Installers and plumbers must continue to follow approved plans and provide the required documentation to confirm the system has been installed correctly.

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27 September 2026

