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Most non-sewered areas in Wollongong use septic tank systems to store, treat and/or dispose of wastewater onsite. When installed and maintained correctly, these systems provide a cost effective and safe method for managing wastewater where connection to the sewer is not an option. Council regulations require all septic systems to be in good working order and have an Approval to Operate.

## WHAT ARE SEPTIC TANK SYSTEMS?

There are two types of Septic Tank Systems that are commonly used in the Wollongong Council area. These are:

### 1 Conventional Septic Tank System with Pump Out

A septic tank is a waterproof tank usually located below ground level and provides treatment of sewage by allowing solids to settle to the bottom of the tank and oils and fats to float to the top to form a scum layer. Anaerobic (in the absence of air) bacterial digestion of the stored solids produces a sludge which accumulates at the bottom of the tank. The partly treated effluent flows from the septic tank to a holding tank for regular pump out by a licenced contractor.

As a general rule, the use of a septic tank with a pump out system will be required for the majority of unsewered lands in Austinmer, Coledale, Wombarra, Scarborough and Coalcliff given inherent topographical and geological constraints in these suburbs. An alternative on-site sewage management system will only be considered where appropriate detailed evidence proves that the alternative system provides a higher or more appropriate wastewater treatment option than a pump out system.

The use of a septic tank and pump out system will generally not be allowed on land within any rural or environmental protection zone where sufficient suitable land area is available on-site for alternative on-site sewage management systems.

### 2 Septic Tank with Inground Treatment System

There are two types of inground treatment systems commonly used for the disposal of wastewater from a septic tank. These are absorption trenches and evapotranspiration areas.

#### a Absorption trenches

The absorption trench receives primary treated effluent directly from the septic tank. The role of the trench is to evenly discharge the effluent into the subsoil and then filters it as it percolates through the soil layers.

#### b Evapotranspiration Bed (ET Bed)

The Evapotranspiration bed is an area made of sand and gravel which is not sealed at the base and sides. The hydraulic load of these beds is taken up by evaporation and transpiration through vegetation, as well as percolation of the effluent through the permeable base of the bed. The beds are required to be professionally designed so that they are well vegetated and mounded to prevent the ET bed becoming waterlogged during rainwater events.

If you are considering installing a septic system, prior approval is required from Council. An *Application to Install and or Operate an Onsite Sewage Management System* Form must be submitted and approved prior to any works occurring.

Further Information is available by contacting Wollongong City Council on 4227 7111.