

# Fact Sheet 7

## Purchasing a dwelling in Nillumbik

There are around 6000 properties within the Shire of Nillumbik that are not connected to mains sewerage. These properties are serviced by an onsite wastewater disposal system (septic tank system). Wastewater if not properly managed can impact on public health and the environment.

There are 10 fact sheets about onsite wastewater systems:

1. Conventional septic tanks
2. Aerated wastewater treatment plants
3. Sand filters
4. Split system
5. Common disposal methods for primary treatment
6. Common disposal methods for secondary treatment
7. Purchasing a dwelling in Nillumbik
8. Greywater reuse
9. Indigenous plants and grasses for transpiration
10. Decommissioning your domestic wastewater system

This fact sheet provides information about what you need to consider when purchasing a property with an onsite wastewater system.

### What type of wastewater system does the property have?

It is important to know what type of system is installed in the property you have purchased. Wastewater systems require routine maintenance and inspections, therefore it is important to know the type of system and the requirements to keep it working correctly. Looking after a system will ensure it operates effectively, lasts longer and has less impact on the environment.

The most common systems installed in Nillumbik are septic tank and trench systems. Other approved systems are aerated wastewater treatment systems (AWTS) commonly called treatment plants, sand filters and composting toilets. For information on the types of approved systems, read Fact Sheets 1 to 10.

### Location of the onsite wastewater system and effluent disposal area

It is important to know the location of the tank and effluent disposal area so maintenance and inspections can be easily carried out and problems can be quickly identified. The effluent disposal

area might be trenches for a septic tank or irrigation (above or below ground) for an AWTS.

### Age of the system

Depending on how well a system has been maintained, most systems will operate effectively for around 20 to 25 years.

### Signs the wastewater system is failing

Indicators of a failing effluent disposal area can include but are not limited to:

- Effluent disposal area is wet or soggy with wastewater pooling on the ground.
- Lush green grass downslope of effluent disposal area.
- The smell of sewage near the septic tank or absorption area.
- Drains and toilets run slowly.

A failing effluent disposal area will require a system upgrade or replacement.

### When was the system last pumped out?

The tank should be pumped out every three to five years. It is recommended that tanks are pumped out when a new home is purchased with a follow up every three years.

## For information

For information on onsite wastewater systems contact Environmental Health on 9433 3340.

## When was the system serviced?

An AWTS should be serviced every three months. Often these services are arranged through agreements with service agents. Ensure these details are obtained from the previous owner, along with any manuals and records.

## How many people have been living in the dwelling in recent years?

The number of people living in a dwelling directly impacts the amount of wastewater generated. A system that has been working correctly with just one or two people may not cope with an increase to four or five. It is important to monitor water usage and the effluent disposal area to ensure the system is not overloaded.

## Have water saving appliances been used by the previous occupants?

Appliances that generate large volumes of water can cause an effluent disposal area to become saturated. It's a good idea to find out what appliances the previous occupants were using.

## Vacant dwellings

It can be difficult to tell whether an onsite wastewater system is operating correctly in a dwelling that has been vacant for a period of time. It is recommended that the system is monitored to ensure it is operating correctly.

