



Ensuring our water is safe and clean

A reliable supply of quality drinking water is essential for community health and wellbeing. It's extremely important to protect drinking water catchments from the impacts of onsite wastewater treatment systems such as septic tanks.

Drinking water catchments

Many waterways in rural Victoria lead to a point where drinking water is sourced. If your property drains to a point where raw water is drawn for drinking water purposes, you live in a drinking water catchment.

Under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*, Declared Special Areas (Water Supply Catchments) officially recognise designated catchments that are used for water supply purposes.

Our Otway Water Supply System is a Declared Special Area, highlighting the importance of the catchment to the community, land managers and planners. To avoid potential risks to public health, the development and use of land within the catchment needs to be managed.

Wannon Water is a referral authority for planning permit applications in the declared area where we have specific requirements for the location, specifications and maintenance of onsite wastewater systems

Onsite wastewater management

Onsite wastewater management systems are used in unsewered areas. They allow for sewage to be recycled, treated, or disposed of onsite.

The systems separates water, solid matter and oils, releasing the water into the surrounding soil. When the land size and soil type are determined as 'capable', the soil naturally removes viruses and harmful bacteria before the water reaches the groundwater.

Application requirements

If you are considering installing an onsite wastewater system in the declared area, please complete and include the following documents with your application to council:

1. A detailed site plan showing the proposed location of dwellings, outbuildings, dams, waterways, driveways, stormwater drainage, effluent disposal fields and wastewater treatment units (septic tanks).
2. A current land capability assessment undertaken by a geotechnical engineer and a wastewater management plan, including a water and nutrient balance.
3. Information about any existing wastewater treatment systems in place.
4. Information about the current land use and development and any proposed changes.

Land requirements

We will object to, and not approve, a permit to construct an onsite wastewater management system and/or develop land in a declared area if the applicant fails to meet any of the following requirements:

- The irrigation/leaching field must be at least 100 metres from any water supply, waterway or water offtake point.
- All wastewater systems must be installed correctly and well maintained.
- Properties must be no less than 4,000 square metres. Properties between 4,000 and 10,000

square metres are all assessed for their suitability. Properties below 4,000 square metres are considered too constrained to handle domestic wastewater.

Other factors that will be considered as part of the assessment process include:

- Suitable slope
- Minimal presence of erosion
- The existence of vegetation
- Rainfall and other climatic conditions that affect the land.

Site constraints relating to density and land zoning may also have an impact. Colac Otway Shire Council's Domestic Wastewater Management Plan may provide guidance on the suitability of an onsite domestic management system based on the location of the land.

Planning permit assessment

We refer to the following publications when considering a planning permit for a development in a declared area:

- *Code of Practice for Onsite Wastewater Management* (EPA publication 891.4, or as amended).
- Colac Otway Shire Council's Domestic Wastewater Management Plan.
- AS/NZS 1547: Onsite Domestic Wastewater Management.

Further information

Further information about onsite wastewater and a list of approved/certified systems is available on the [Environment Protection Authority website](https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/environment-protection-authority).

Other information is available on the following websites:

wannonwater.com.au

[Colac Otway Shire Council](#)

[Department of Health](#)

[Department of Transport and Planning](#)

Catchment map

