

**SEWER CONNECTIONS AND ONSITE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS:**

**WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN BUYING AN ESTABLISHED DWELLING WITHIN MOORABOOL SHIRE COUNCIL.**

When purchasing a property within Moorabool Shire Council, it will either be connected to sewer or have its own onsite wastewater management system (OWMS), such as a standard septic tank or secondary treatment system. Before deciding on buying a property, we ask you to carefully read through this fact sheet to ensure that you understand the requirements of owning a property with an existing OWMS.

**BUYING IN SEWERED TOWNSHIPS**

Most of Bacchus Marsh, Maddingley, Darley, and Hopetoun Park are serviced through the Greater Western Water sewer network, while Ballan and Gordon are serviced through the Central Highlands Water sewer network. Unfortunately, there are some properties within these areas that may have not connected to the sewer network and still have an OWMS.

When considering the purchase of a property in a sewered town, ask the real estate agent or the current owner if the property is connected to sewer. If the answer is YES that is great news and one less thing for you to worry about.

If the answer is NO, you have an issue to consider as all properties in the sewered area should be connected. If you decide to go ahead with the purchase of the property, Council suggests that you factor in the cost of connection when negotiating your purchase price and have the job done as soon as you take ownership, as the property cannot remain unconnected indefinitely. If you decide not to connect, please be aware that you will be charged a service fee as part of your water rates from the water authority merely for the service being available.

**BUYING IN UNSEWERED TOWNSHIPS**

Dwellings located in small hamlets and in remote areas are serviced by their own OWMS. It is important that prospective buyers understand how wastewater disposal occurs on the property, as any small change in water usage can make a big difference to how the system operates and may result in the system failing.

Here is a checklist of questions to ask the current owner or the real estate agent.

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

There are different types of systems used in the Shire; however, the most common are a septic tank with trenches and an aerated wastewater treatment system (AWTS).

* **How old is the system?**

The older the system is, the more likely it is that it’s nearing the end of its life. Most traditional systems will operate effectively for around 25-30 years; however, this varies greatly depending on well the system has been looked after.

* **Where is the septic tank?**

Can you see it or is it completely covered? If it is covered, ask where the system is.

* **When was the system last pumped out?**

Septic tanks and AWTS should be pumped out every 3 to 5 years. If you decide to go ahead with the purchase, Council recommends that you have the system pumped out once you move in.

* **Does all the wastewater go into the septic tank or is the greywater separated?**

Separate greywater systems are uncommon in very old homes. If the greywater is separate you need to ensure that the greywater is contained within the property’s boundaries.

* **Where is the disposal field?**

Generally, the disposal field will either be trenches or an irrigation field depending on the system. If you can’t find it, ask the real estate agent, or current owner where it is.

* **Is the disposal field waterlogged or does it have water ponding on the surface?**

Provided that there hasn’t been any recent heavy rain, this may be an indication that the system isn’t working correctly or is struggling with the amount of water being disposed of. Work will be required to fix these issues.

* **Is water directed off the property?**

It is illegal to discharge wastewater off a property. If this is occurring, you will need to carry out works to fix the problem.

* **If the system is an AWTS, when was it last serviced?**

These treatment plants should be serviced every 3 months. If you decide to purchase the property, don’t forget to obtain the details for the service agent, manuals, and past records from the current owner.

* **How many people have been using the system for the past few years?**

The number of people living in a house has a direct impact on the amount of wastewater being generated. A system that has worked for years with 1 or 2 people living in the house may not cope with 4 or 5 people using it. If you decide to purchase the property, you will need to be aware of and monitor your water usage and the disposal field.

* **Have the previous occupants been using water saving appliances?**

Appliances that generate a large volume of water can cause a disposal field that is nearing the end of its life to fail. Council recommends that water saving appliances are installed.

* **Is the house empty?**

You won’t be able to tell if the OWMS is operating correctly in a house that isn’t being occupied. It is important to keep close eye on the system once you start using it, to ensure that it operates correctly.

**REASONS FOR CHECKING BEFORE PURCHASING**

Repairing a failing system can be costly and asking questions to the current owner or real estate agent can save you time and money in the future. If you decide to purchase the property and the system does need work, Council has a list of plumbers, service agents, and de-sludging contractors available. Please be aware that that any work outside of maintenance will require a permit from Council’s Environmental Health Team.

**WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION**

If you have never lived in a home with an OWMS, Council has several information sheets on our website which covers the different types of systems and how they work. If you like some advice or assistance, please contact Council’s Environmental Health Team on 5366 7100 or send an email to info@moorabool.vic.gov.au. Please be aware that we cannot discuss with you anything about a property that you don’t own, however we can tell you if we have that property on our database, the type of system and the age of the system

