

**DIRECTOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
SERVICES REPORT**

13 June 2006

**DSDS9 ON-SITE SEWAGE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
STRATEGY
FILE: 257 MGR****SUMMARY:**

Reporting on the OSMS Strategy (existing systems) progress from the period of 20 May 2005 to 31 May 2006.

**Statistics**

Since 20 May 2005, 443 inspections of existing On-site Sewage Management Systems (OSMS) have been completed – of which 132 were identified as non-complying and requiring work. There were 311 complying systems with 275 being passed on the first inspection and the remaining 36 requiring re-inspection.

** **Please Note** – The previous Environmental Officer ceased working in late May 2005. The position was vacant for approximately five (5) months until the current Officer, Michael Roberts, commenced work in mid October 2005.*

The most common problems experienced with non-complying systems are trench failure and greywater diversion. Direct overflow of wastewater from the septic tank without any secondary treatment through absorption trenching is also another common problem particularly in rural areas up-river.

The number of illegal dwellings, particularly in up-river localities, is also of considerable concern. Dwelling approval searches are undertaken prior to commencing inspections. Further notes are taken whilst in the field to assist in determining the approval status of the dwelling. Approximately 60% of inspected sites require further development approval investigation prior to issuing any written correspondence. This includes checking old topographic maps, Civicview registers and hardcopy files. Roughly half of these checks are considered to be existing uses. Where these checks prove unsuccessful further correspondence is sent out to the existing owner seeking written/verbal information on the circumstances under which the dwelling or other structure was erected. This process has been notably time consuming and requires considerable input from the planning section. Initial OSMS inspection reports are consequently delayed for some time while these investigations are undertaken.

Approvals, letters and other correspondence

There have been 311 approvals to operate issued since 20 May 2005. In the same period approximately 132 non-compliance letters have been issued and 68 dwelling approval searches done.

Inspection/Audit Program

Currently, the Toorooka and Glenrock/North Kempsey areas along Saleyards Rd are being finalised. In recent months efforts have been focused on up-river localities with Yessabah, Yarravel, Temagog, Skillion Flat, Mungay Creek, Mooneba, Millbank, part of Hickey's Creek, Hickey's Creek, Corangula and Deep Creek all being assessed. In the coming months inspection efforts will focus on the Collombatti and Kundabung areas. Re-inspection of systems operating in the Stuarts Point area is also a priority in the coming months as the majority of septic approvals have expired. By the end of this year, Council's DCP 32 – On-site Sewage Management Strategy will be reviewed and updated.

Report Implications:

- ***Environmental***

Non-complying systems have the potential to adversely impact on sensitive ecosystems particularly natural watercourses. Discharge of wastewater into these ecosystems can have severe detrimental effects. An increase in nutrient loads, such as nitrogen and phosphorous, will often trigger algal blooms. Further environmental ramifications of failing OSMS include; ground and surface water contamination, vegetation degradation, soil degradation as well as associated health issues. These are discussed in further detail under Council's OSMS strategy.

Properties that fall within a 100m buffer distance from any permanent surface waters (eg rivers, streams, lakes etc) are considered high risk and receive priority under the audit inspection program.

- ***Social***

No adverse social impacts.

- ***Economic (Financial)***

OSMS repairs or upgrades can come at considerable costs for the owner. Revenue from septic inspection/registration fees associated with the on-going implementation of Councils OSMS strategy.

- *Policy or Statutory*

Council's DCP 32 – OSMS Strategy and sections 68 and 124 of the Local Government Act 1993. Regulations in force include Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 and the recently amended Local Government (General) Amendment (Domestic Greywater Diversion) Regulation 2006 which commences on 1 July 2006.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the information be noted.

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R B Pitt
DIRECTOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES