



# Onsite Domestic Wastewater

## Stakeholder Update 1 - May/2018

This newsletter is the first of what will be produced annually to keep our key stakeholders informed of what Baw Baw Shire Council are focusing on in septic tank management

### Core Values

The greater Baw Baw area is known for its rural identity, thriving villages, productive and inspiring landscapes. To protect this vision, the Public Health team manages onsite domestic wastewater (septic tanks) to the benefit of;

#### Public Health

Poorly managed wastewater can cause negative health impacts both at the local scale (for example, a few people that come into contact with wastewater) to large numbers of people from untreated wastewater polluting drinking water supply.

#### Environment

Wastewater can increase the nitrogen and phosphorus present in local waterways. Increased nitrogen and phosphorus increases the growth of algae and weeds, negatively impacting the health of our aquatic ecosystems.

### Reaching Out to Community

While a regulatory presence is important in domestic wastewater management, sustained interest and ownership of septic tank care amongst home owners is more likely to be achieved through awareness and education. Some of the different ways we have engaged with the community include; facebook, magnets, postcards, advertisements and fact sheets.



#### Key Messages;

- Septic tanks and drinking water supply
- Maintenance is cheaper than replacement
- Where do you think your wastewater goes?



**Has your Septic tank survived Christmas? Don't let it pack up at your Australia Day BBQ..**

Can't remember when your septic tank was pumped out? If it was more than five years ago, it's a good idea to contact a pumpout contractor to clean your septic tank.

A full septic tank does not provide enough holding time to settle out the solids that can block the disposal area. This can end up in effluent surfacing in your backyard or even flow into public places or waterways.

Like owning a car, it is often cheaper to maintain than it is to replace. You can choose to pay either a few hundred dollars for a pump out, or a few thousand dollars to replace the failing disposal area.

Once you have had your septic tank pumped out please pass the receipt on to Baw Baw Shire Council, Public Health Department by email to [health@bawbawshire.vic.gov.au](mailto:health@bawbawshire.vic.gov.au), or in person at one of our Customer Service Centres.

Having pumpout information from across the Shire allows us to reduce the overall risk to public health, drinking water and the environment.

[www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au](http://www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au)



#### Where do you think your wastewater goes?

Did you know there are over 10,000 septic systems across the Baw Baw Shire? An average household produces around 200,000 litres of wastewater per year, which all ends up in your front or back yard.



For more information about septic tank health or wastewater management, contact Council's Public Health Team on 5624 2411.

[www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au/Wastewater](http://www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au/Wastewater)



## Growth Figures and Septic Tanks

### How's This

The five year average to date for issuing permits to use a new septic system is 120 each year.

Might not sound like a lot but...

If the average house is three bedrooms this equates to;

An extra 26 Million litres of wastewater (10 Olympic sized swimming pools) each year into the ground.

### Then Consider

We expect that across the shire there is in the order of 12,000 septic tank systems in the ground.

Approximately 1,500 of these are located in catchments used to supply our drinking water.

Domestic wastewater management is important. If we want to maintain what Baw Baw is valued for, we must pro actively manage septic tanks.

## Baw Baw Shire Council Collaborating Across Municipal Boundaries

Baw Baw Shire Council have played a key role in developing a cooperative network of councils across South Eastern Victoria. The 12 councils of our region have committed to share information and collaborate in a positive environment to improve onsite domestic wastewater management.

We hope that by leading the formation of this group, our council will;

- Be exposed to industry best practice
- Discover ways of managing wastewater that protect public health and the environment of Baw Baw
- Be amongst a consistent and powerful message to policy makers that will influence the changes required to improve onsite domestic wastewater management.



## Baw Baw Onsite Domestic Wastewater Priorities

### We will continue;

- To ensure that every new wastewater system installed or altered is at a standard and maintained so that it does not negatively impact public health or the environment.
- To act on reports of negative impact, with our first course of action to be containing all waste within the lot boundary.
- Work with community to raise the awareness of what is to lose if we don't maintain septic tanks.
- Work with landowners to ensure they understand their role in protecting public health and the environment.

### We are working on;

- Ensuring our procedures are; clear, transparent and allow us to be effective, consistent and fair.
- Ways to focus resources on areas that are more likely to negatively impact public health and the environment (water supply catchments and higher density developments with septic tanks).
- Our information database so we can efficiently manage septic tanks.

### Want to know more?

For more information about septic tank health or wastewater management, contact Council's Public Health Team on 5624 2411, by email at [health@bawbawshire.vic.gov.au](mailto:health@bawbawshire.vic.gov.au) or visit [www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au/wastewater](http://www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au/wastewater)

