



Is your septic system healthy?

A failing septic system can be dangerous. 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.

Why should you maintain a healthy septic system?

Benefits for You and Your Family

If you have a failing system and untreated effluent is surfacing in your backyard, anyone coming into contact with this can become ill.

Animals, including domestic pets, can spread disease when tracking through untreated wastewater.

Not getting your system pumped out or serviced will cause it to fail, costing you thousands of dollars in repairs.

Benefits for Others

Legally, you are required to ensure your system does not cause harm to the health of other people or the environment (*Environment Protection Act 1970* and *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*).

A failing septic tank has the potential to impact other people when leaking to drinking water supplies or public places.

Weed and algal growth in waterways can increase from nitrogen and phosphorus input from leaking septic tanks.

Where does your drinking water come from?

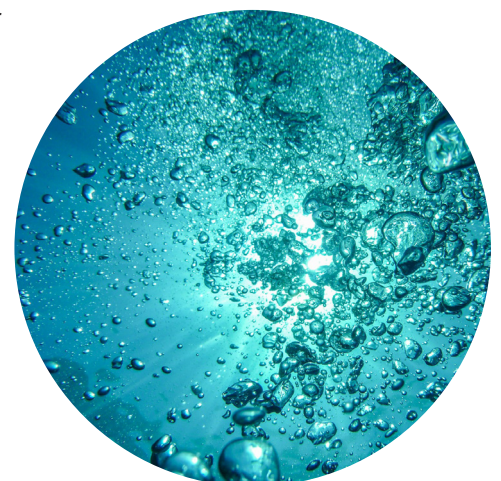
In Baw Baw Shire, most of the water supplied by the Water Retailers Gippsland Water and South East Water comes from open water supply catchment areas that contain houses, farms and recreation areas.

Management of septic tanks is especially important in areas that are used to supply drinking water for large numbers of people.

If you don't capture rainwater for drinking and are located in the following towns, your water comes from an open water supply catchment.

- Willow Grove
- Trafalgar
- Yarragon
- Darnum
- Buln Buln
- Neerim South
- Noojee
- Rawson
- Erica

Baw Baw Shire Council and the local Water Corporations take septic tanks seriously and want to manage them to ensure everyone can enjoy safe drinking water and healthy environments.



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 or visit www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au

How should I maintain the septic system on my property?

Get an Expert

Your system needs to be inspected every **three years**.

The wastewater contractors in Baw Baw Shire are very experienced with on-site wastewater and can advise if your system requires pumping out, or when it should be next inspected.

Residents are encouraged to always have advice from contractors in writing, and then send it to Council at health@bawbawshire.vic.gov.au to update records.

If you have an aerated wastewater treatment system you will need it serviced **four times a year**.

These systems are highly calibrated and need frequent maintenance to make sure they continue to work.

It is a good idea, and best practice, to have an ongoing contract with a service agent that will regularly service your system to ensure it works as designed.

Cost

- Over three years for septic tank; approximately \$400 for a pump out.
- Over three years for a sewer house; in excess of \$1,500.
- Aerated wastewater treatment systems are more expensive to maintain and have an annual maintenance fee as well as a pump out fee.
- Like servicing your car, a septic system is cheaper to maintain rather than paying for a brand new replacement.

What can you do to make sure your system continues to function?

In the house

- Use cleaning products free of harsh chemicals i.e. bleach and chlorine. Bi-carb soda and vinegar are great substitutes.
- Keep in mind, your septic is a living system containing the same bacteria and organisms that are in your gut. Using harsh chemicals in the kitchen, laundry or bathroom can poison your septic and kill the beneficial organisms.
- Remove fats and oils from your dishes and pans before you wash them. Let them cool and wipe out with a paper towel and throw in the rubbish.
- Spread your loads of washing out. Large surges of water from intensive use of the washing machine, dishwasher or bath can stir up your septic tank and block the effluent dispersal area.

In the yard

- Know where the septic tank and effluent disposal area are.
- Keep access to the tank clear so service agents can easily pump the tank out.
- Divert all rainwater overflow from tanks, driveways or paving away from the effluent dispersal area.
- Keep the lawn or vegetation on the effluent dispersal area healthy. These plants suck out the moisture and nutrients, if you kill them you risk your yard becoming soggy and wet. Be careful though, the roots of some trees are too vigorous and block the dispersal area.
- Don't cover the dispersal area with concrete, buildings, pools or anything that will impact plant health and evaporative capacity of the area.



KEEP IT HEALTHY

The two most important things to protect are the septic tank and the effluent dispersal area.

For more information, visit:

Baw Baw Shire Council at www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au

Melbourne Water at www.melbournewater.com.au

Gippsland Water at www.gippswater.com.au

Victorian Environment Protection Authority at www.epa.vic.gov.au

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning at www.delwp.vic.gov.au

Department of Health and Human Services at www.dhhs.vic.gov.au

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 or visit www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au