

**Submission**

**No 2**

## **INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF DOMESTIC WASTEWATER**

**Organisation:** Tweed Shire Council  
**Name:** Mr Ross Cameron  
**Position:** Manager Building and Environmental Health  
**Date Received:** 10/11/2011

Council Reference: ECM41393054  
Your Reference:



**TWEED**  
SHIRE COUNCIL

4 November 2011

Customer Service | 1300 292 872 | (02) 6670 2400

Legislative Assembly  
Committee on Environment and Regulation  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au  
[www.tweed.nsw.gov.au](http://www.tweed.nsw.gov.au)

Fax (02) 6670 2429  
PO Box 816  
Murwillumbah NSW 2484

Please address all communications  
to the General Manager

ABN: 90 178 732 496

**Attention: Chris Patterson MP**

Dear Sir

### **Inquiry into Management of Domestic Wastewater**

I Refer to your letter dated 1 November 2011 and provide the following submission in relation to the management of on-site sewage management systems within the Tweed Shire.

In October 2002 a report and recommendation was referred to Council for the adoption of an On-site Sewage Management Strategy. The report was the result of amendments to the Local Government Act making it an obligation for Councils to better supervise the operation and installation of On-site Sewage Management Systems (OSSMs) and ensure that property owners take greater responsibility for maintaining their systems. The recommendation to adopt the strategy was supported by Council and to assist in its implementation certain fees and charges were also adopted to resource the regulating and management of these systems. The adopted fees included an approval to operate fee, the transfer of an approval to operate and an annual charge for the management and auditing of OSSMs has been levied against all rated properties which are recorded as having an on-site sewage management system. Other fees that have been adopted include pre-purchase reports and the approval of new systems and installations.

Soon after adoption of the strategy a program was commenced that included a requirement for the registering of all systems within the shire, undertaking an inspection of each system to verify correct operation, requiring the correction of defective systems, and a risk assessment to determine the risk factor for each installation.

Council's current records identify that Tweed has approximately 4,891 OSSMs registered however other systems exist which have not been registered and are gradually being picked up during the auditing process. Currently Council employs two full time OSSM officers; one officer is dedicated full time to the auditing process and the other to as well as auditing, assesses applications for approval, undertakes inspections and issues reports for pre-purchase requests and other processes involved with on-site sewage management.

In relation to the auditing process, information in relation to the number of systems inspected and the percentage of system failures found are included in Council's quarterly reports. Inspections in relation to auditing are done by the use of mapping on a street by street basis and owners are usually notified in writing prior to the start of inspections in

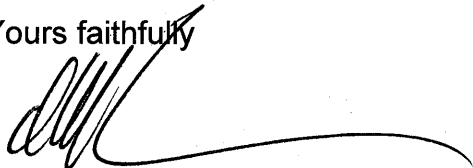
their area. Where owners have not previously applied for approval to operate or where Council has no such record of an existing approval it is requested that an application be made for an approval to operate and the appropriate application fee paid. These systems are then also included on Council's register.

Following the inspection an approval to operate is normally issued to the applicant and in many instances the approval requires the owner/applicant to undertake repairs or other works to improve the operation of the system within a set timeframe. The approval however only relates to the operation of a system of sewage management on land and the granting of such approval in no way authorises any ancillary activity on the land that may require approval under the Local Government Act 1993 and /or other legislation and this is specified on the approval. Inspections are also undertaken upon receipt of complaints or when Council becomes aware that a system may be malfunctioning or possibly causing public health or environmental problems. Following these inspections improvement notices or other orders may be issued for immediate rectification works or other action that may be deemed necessary in relation to the problem.

Council also offers a pre-purchase inspection service at the request of home purchasers or Solicitor/Conveyancer prior to the sale and settlement or transfer of ownership of a property. To obtain an inspection the relevant application form is completed and applicable fee paid. An inspection of the system is then undertaken and Council provides to the applicant a written report about the state of the system and any other matters relating to the system that may have been identified.

I hope that the above information assists with your enquiry however should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me on the number identified above.

Yours faithfully



**Ross Cameron**  
**MANAGER BUILDING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**