

GUIDANCE ON APPLYING FOR EPA APPROVAL OF AN ONSITE WASTEWATER SYSTEM

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1. INTRODUCTION

The *Environment Protection Act 1970* defines onsite wastewater systems treating no more than 5,000 litres per day of wastewater of domestic origin as 'septic tank systems', which are subject to a two-stage approval process:

- EPA Victoria approves the types of onsite systems that may be installed in Victoria
- Municipal councils administer a permit system which regulates the installation, maintenance and monitoring of individual units at specific sites

EPA ensures that systems that are approved comply with relevant technical standards, have had their performance independently verified and are supported, as needed, by appropriate operating, maintenance and monitoring regimes. These requirements apply to all systems.

This process ensures that onsite systems are sustainable and protect public health, environmental values and community amenity.

This publication is designed to assist applicants for EPA approval of onsite wastewater treatment systems by clarifying the information they should include in their applications.

2. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Applications may be submitted in hard copy or electronic format. They must include:

- an application form signed and dated either by the applicant or a person authorised to act on their behalf (written confirmation of such authorisation should be provided with the application). This form must be provided in hard copy;
- where applicable, a certificate of incorporation and business name certificate; and
- supporting technical information as required by Parts A to D of the application form.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY

The information in an application may be subject to the freedom of information process. Applications who want specific information to be treated as confidential should clearly indicate this by marking each and every relevant page 'commercial in confidence'.

4. TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The technical information that must accompany applications is described in Parts A to D of the application form.

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4.1 Part A – Description of the System

Items 1 and 2 EPA requires the applicant to demonstrate that the design of the proposed system addresses technical issues such as adequate sizing to deal with design organic and hydraulic loads, ability to deal with variations in loading, reliability and contingencies for dealing with system failures. Applications must include information demonstrating that the design of the system will allow the relevant performance requirements to be achieved.

Item 3 An A4 plan must be attached to the application showing the intended layout of the system, including typical siting of tanks, chambers and control panels, pipes, effluent application areas and other relevant details.

Item 4 If EPA approves a system, it issues a public domain ‘certificate of approval’, to inform stakeholders of the approval. This includes a schematic diagram of the approved system so that, for example, local government can confirm that a system specified in a permit application has been approved.

Thus, an application must include a schematic diagram of the system in a suitable electronic format (such as pdf format), suitable for attachment to a certificate of approval.

4.2 Part B – Verifying the System’s Performance and Quality Control

Items 5 and 6 A range of publications provide performance requirements for onsite systems - the publications that are relevant depend on a system’s technology. Item 5 describes the publications that relate to specific types of onsite system.

Applicants must use an independent testing agency to determine how their system complies with the design, installation, performance and management criteria in the relevant publications. Systems that use novel treatment processes should be assessed for compliance with the generic performance criteria for onsite systems in *Australian Standard AS 1547:2000 On-Site Domestic Wastewater Management*.

The application must also provide evidence that the independent testing agency is accredited under the Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand (‘JAS-ANZ’), or an equivalent independent process. The independence of the testing process is critical. If alternatives to supervision by a JAS-ANZ accredited agency are proposed, the applicant must be able to demonstrate the independence and rigour of the testing process.

Item 7 Copies of the laboratory analytical results from the system’s testing program should be provided with the application. These should be endorsed for the relevant analyses by the National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA).

Item 8 Applicants should demonstrate that their system has obtained product approval under the StandardsMark Quality Assurance program, has ISO 9000 accreditation, or has gained comparable accreditation under a quality assurance process.

If manufacture of the system has not commenced, the applicant must provide evidence that the system has been submitted for accreditation under the type of process described above.

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4.3 Part C – Operation and Maintenance

Item 9 An applicant should demonstrate they have developed operating and maintenance procedures that will allow their system to achieve the appropriate performance levels over its service life. The requirement to provide copies of a system's installation manual, householder operating manual and servicing manual (including service report sheet) is designed to allow EPA to assess whether satisfactory operating and maintenance procedures have been developed.

Item 10 Copies of the warranty and system service life must be provided with the application. This is intended to assist EPA to assess the ability of a system to sustainably protect public health and environmental values over its operating life.

4.4 Part D – Systems Approved in Other Australian Jurisdictions

Items 11, 12 and 13 EPA appreciates that some applicants will seek approval of systems which have already been approved in other Australian jurisdictions.

Where an applicant believes they can demonstrate that:

- their system(s) complies with relevant Australian Standards;
- the performance of the system has been verified by an independent testing process, as described in item 5; and
- the system has been granted generic approval by the relevant environmental or health agency in another Australian State or Territory;

they should complete Parts A and D of the application form. As well as confirmation that the system has been approved, a copy of the approval conditions must also be provided.

The approval in another Australian State or territory must be a generic approval from the relevant environmental or health agency. Systems that have only obtained one-off approval from local government (as allowed in some jurisdictions) must go through the normal application process for EPA approval in Victoria.

EPA may, at its discretion, approve systems that meet the above criteria. Applicants whose systems have already been approved in other jurisdictions are advised to contact EPA to discuss the information they should provide.

5. INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS

EPA can only assess complete applications. Incomplete applications will be returned with a request to provide further information.

Applicants are advised to contact EPA to discuss the information they should provide, prior to formally lodging applications.

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LODGEMENT AND FURTHER INFORMATION

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