ON-SITE SYSTEMS REQUIRE CHIEF EXECUTIVE APPROVAL

Purpose
The purpose of this newsflash is to remind council plumbing inspectors that all on-site sewerage treatment systems, except those that are a septic tank ONLY, must have Chief Executive Approval from the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation (DLGPSR) prior to their installation.

Background
DLGPSR are conscious of previous advice provided to councils resulting in the installation of on-site sewerage treatment systems which did not have approval issued by the administering authority of the day.

To remove any doubt, the legislative requirement is for ALL on-site sewerage treatment systems to have Chief Executive Approval prior to installation, except for those which consist of a septic tank ONLY and nothing else.

Legislation
The relevant sections of the Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002 (P&D Act) and the Queensland Plumbing and Wastewater Code (QPWC) have been stated below. They include Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002 Section 91(b) which states:

91 Applying for chief executive approval

A person may, in the approved form, apply to the chief executive for an approval (a chief executive approval) for—
(a) an on-site sewage treatment plant or greywater treatment plant if all of the plant is built on the premises where it is, or is to be, used; or
(b) an element of an on-site sewage treatment plant or greywater treatment plant, if all of the element is built on the premises where the plant is, or is to be, used; or
(c) a wholly prefabricated on-site sewage treatment plant or greywater treatment plant; or
(d) a prefabricated element of an on-site sewage treatment plant or greywater treatment plant; or
(e) an on-site sewage treatment plant or greywater treatment plant or element of an on-site sewage treatment plant or greywater treatment plant mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (d) if the plant is proposed to be installed only for testing purposes.

The Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002 Section 125 states that:

125 Restriction on building or installing particular on-site sewerage treatment plant

A person must not build or install an on-site sewerage treatment plant (other than an on-site sewerage treatment plant that consists only of a septic tank) unless—
(a) a chief executive approval has been given for the plant; and
(b) the building or installation complies with all conditions of the chief executive approval.
Maximum penalty—165 penalty units.
The QPWC is called up by the P&D Act. The QPWC (Section 4.2) specifically references sand filters when discussing those systems/devices requiring approval.

The QPWC states:

Chief executive approval applies to on-site sewage treatment plants that:
• are generally available for purchase by retail;
• treat sewage of predominantly domestic origin;
• uses more than primary treatment (solids settlement); and
• where the treated sewage is used primarily for the purposes of recycling water for -
  • above ground spray irrigation,
  • covered surface drip irrigation,
  • shallow subsurface irrigation, or
  • by other means such as evapotranspiration beds, absorption trench/bed or mound.

An on-site sewage treatment plant for water recycling may include many types of devices. The devices included in this Code are output defined and produce a discrete category of risk where members of, and visitors to, the household may come into direct contact with the treated effluent. These devices may include but are not limited to:
• an aerated wastewater treatment system;
• a single pass or recirculating sand filter;
• a reverse osmosis or micro-filtration filter;
• a biological filter; or
• any treatment system or device or combination of treatment hardware to form a treatment unit which satisfies the accreditation, performance and design requirements of this Code.

Interpretation
The Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation have determined that sand filters are captured within section 91(b) of the P&D Act, as the sand filter follows on from a septic tank (which does not require approval if used unaccompanied) and is therefore an element of an on-site sewage treatment plant. The Code also specifically states that an on-site sewage treatment plant may include many types of devices and that these devices may include a single pass or recirculating sand filter.

Contact Officer
If you have any further queries about on-site sewerage please do not hesitate to contact Anita Packwood on (07) 3224 2443 or email buildingcodes@dlgpsr.qld.gov.au.