



# Plumbing Newsflash

## 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](mailto:buildingcodes@dlgpsr.qld.gov.au) .