

The septic application process: an Onkaparinga perspective

**Waste Water Management Seminar
Murray Bridge
October 21 – 23, 2003**



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- 2. The Application Process**
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1. CITY OF ONKAPARINGA

- Largest Council in SA approx 150,000 residents
- Approx 220 septic applications per annum
- Council map: sewer, steds, septic
- 8 FTE EHOs
- Problem areas: Old Noarlunga (currently being sewerred)
Sellicks
Aldinga
Pt Willunga

2. THE APPLICATION PROCESS

2.1 Initial Assessment

- All development applications are assessed by EHOs at meetings 3 times/week
- Many problems have occurred where sheds etc were approved over septic areas or sub-divisions approved which cannot fit septic
- Meetings have significantly reduced problems with development clashing with WCS requirements
- Open space policy conflicts with Code eg patios, min width

2.2 Enquiries

- information sheets given or sent with appropriate application form (remember to update fee schedule)
- Advertising material / Plumbers register – Council policy not permitted as previously people have complained about being left off register or display brochures were hidden or removed by opposition
- Council advice should be unbiased
- Forms: see Reg 12 (1) can be down loaded from www.dhs.sa.gov.au/pehs

2.3 Receipt of application

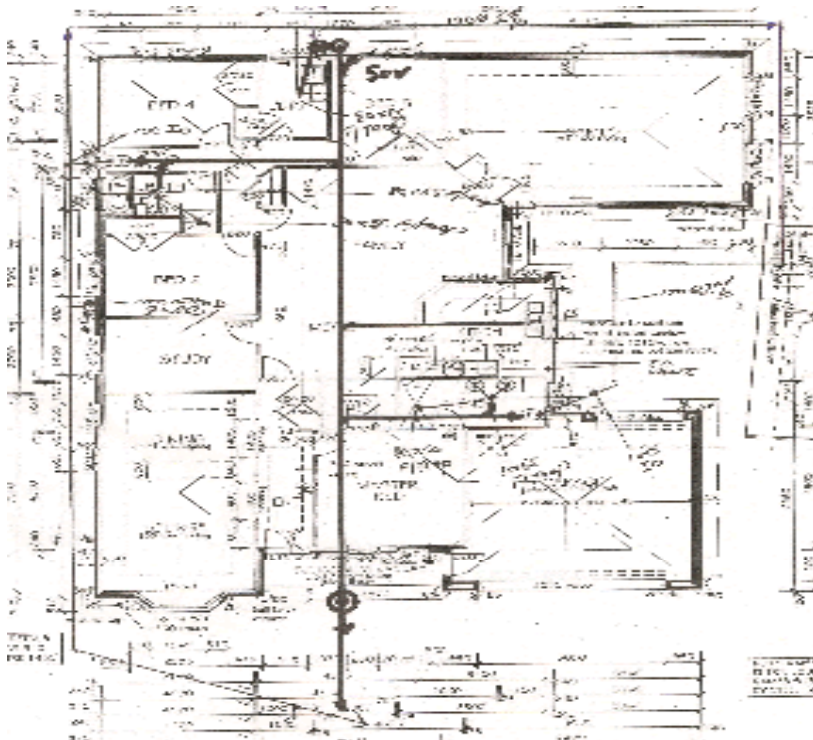
- payment of fees (no GST applies)
- owners signature is critical as it acknowledges that owners are aware of plan and avoids problems where they are not happy with location of tank or type of system after it has been installed
- letter sent to applicant acknowledging receipt of application

3. ASSESSMENT

- Desk top assessment by EHO assigned to that area
- Check for detail against Codes and AS3500
- If OK proceed with site inspection

Example: Poor drain design (Around slab V. through slab) Around slab 79m

- Through slab 46m
- Ground under slab very stable
- Fewer penetrations through slab –weak points
- Less depth for tank
- Reduces piercing in fill
- Cost effective



4. INSPECTIONS

4.1 Site inspection

- Check plans consistent with site
- Consider the likelihood of a driveway or future sheds etc.
- May need tape measure to check set backs OK

COMMON PROBLEMS	SOLUTIONS
Septic already installed	Warning letter or expiation most likely. Ask plumber for statutory declaration signed by JP. Place note on property file. Consider maintenance order registered under Section 7 advice.
Existing devt or bores/water courses etc not shown	Note on plan. Advise applicant for amended plan if likely to affect approval.
Obvious that future driveways or house orientation will be different to plan	Request amended plan.

4.2 Underfloor inspection/ tank and drain and disposal method

- Check consistent with plans
- Lagging through footings 25mm annular spacing
- Under water test: 100mm drain requires 7 litres / metre.
- Bracing on suspended pipe work
- Expansion joints type H-D and E-D soils: refer engineers report
- Fabric should comply with AS3705
- Drainage rock: approx 1 tonne / metre
- Excavator driver is good source of information – be discreet

COMMON PROBLEMS	SOLUTIONS
Notification not made by plumber	Warning letter sent or expiation if already second offence. Sometimes statement signed by JP requested to avoid expiation.
Installation not consistent with plans	Minor changes noted on plan. Major - amended plan requested
Not under water test	Noted on inspection sheet. Depends if water available to site and history of plumber.
Buried before inspection	Very common - Noted on inspection sheet. Action depends on history of plumber.
No or little bracketing on suspended work	Builder or owner advised. Followed up on final. Possible expiation.
Not able to inspect work due to other commitments	Note on file

4.3 FINAL INSPECTION

- Vents
- IOs raised to surface
- Gully grate above paved level but lower than finished floor level
- Irrigation established – warning signs
- Septic tank at surface level
- Check stormwater not entering system.

COMMON PROBLEMS	SOLUTIONS
Notification not made by owner	Rarely is a call made for a final. Keep an eye on progress whenever in the area. Visit premises when it is obvious someone is home. Currently we leave until approx 12 months before drive by inspection. If not home than note made on file. Not effective method – needs improvement.
Irrigation system not complete. Warning signs not installed.	Very common problem. Advise owner of obligation under approval. If no improvement use maintenance order. Very difficult as is common in about 90% of cases. Warning signs never installed. Not even provided in kit by manufacturer. Impossible to monitor. Bond system may resolve problem.
Sheds, driveways, pergolas built over approved irrigation areas.	Common problem difficult to resolve as Planners have often approved the developments. Try and work with the owner to irrigate as much area as available.
Irrigation areas planted with lawn	Very common. Owners often advised by builder that practice is OK. Occurs in about 70% of cases. Advise of requirement but practically impossible to overcome without unrealistic level of resources.



Take note: Concrete tanks can float!

5. FAILED SYSTEMS

- Rental houses: maintenance order
- Owner occupied: management advice eg desludge tank, pump waste around larger area, fence off pumped area, maintenance order
- Application fee: mostly waived to facilitate upgrade
- Aerobic systems: Mainly due to owners being dissatisfied with the cost of operation and irrigation restrictions. Letter initially followed by maintenance order. Sometimes negotiations between service agent for owner to do every 2nd service provided they receive some basic training from agent and make request in writing to us.

6. LOOKING FORWARD

- No underfloor inspections in lieu of a paid site inspection – self certification by licensed plumber on prescribed form. Similar to SA Water model
- Bond: \$500? refunded upon complying final inspection (highest public health priority)
- Greater use of design innovations eg diverter valves, outlet filters, alternative methods



*Photo: Above ground Modified Adsorption Trench (elevated)-MAT(E)
Kingston Golf Course, Tasmania*

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