



# ON-SITE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN DRINKING WATER CATCHMENTS

Do you live in a drinking  
water catchment?

If so, you have duty of care to  
protect water quality.

Do you have an on-site  
wastewater management  
system?

If so, inadequate systems can  
seriously contaminate waterways.

This fact sheet will introduce you to  
Rous Water's *On-site Wastewater  
Management Guidelines*

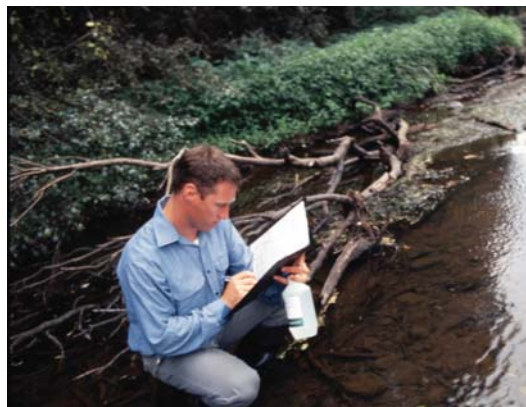
## Regional drinking water catchments

A catchment is an area of land that feeds rainwater into a creek, river or other water body such as a dam. If that water is used for drinking, the catchment is known as a *drinking* water catchment.

Rous Water is a regional water supply authority, supplying drinking water to the local government areas of Lismore (excluding Nimbin), Ballina (excluding Wardell), Byron (excluding Mullumbimby), and Richmond Valley (excluding Casino).

This water is sourced from four key drinking water catchments, including the catchments of Rocky Creek Dam, Emigrant Creek Dam, the Wilsons River Source and the proposed Dunoon Dam.

Rous Water manages these drinking water catchments to ensure the quality of drinking water for over 100,000 people.



## Issues associated with on-site wastewater management systems in drinking water catchments

As a large number of residents living in our drinking water catchments are located in unsewered areas, their wastewater (sewage) is managed by means of 'on-site wastewater management systems'.

Wastewater contains pathogens – micro-organisms that can cause serious illness and disease. Therefore, the risk of on-site wastewater management systems contaminating groundwater and surface waters is a key concern of Rous Water.

Your local council has a critical role in ensuring the correct design, operation and maintenance of on-site wastewater management systems to ensure the protection of water quality and public health.

## Your responsibilities

If you currently live in, intend to live in, or are developing land in a Rous Water drinking water catchment, you have a 'duty of care' to protect water quality. This means that you are *legally* required to minimise impacts on waterways in your catchment.

Many residents do not realise that as owners of on-site wastewater management systems they are legally responsible for ensuring the safe and efficient functioning of their systems. Failing systems can have environmental and public health effects, which in drinking water catchments can be a risk to drinking water quality.

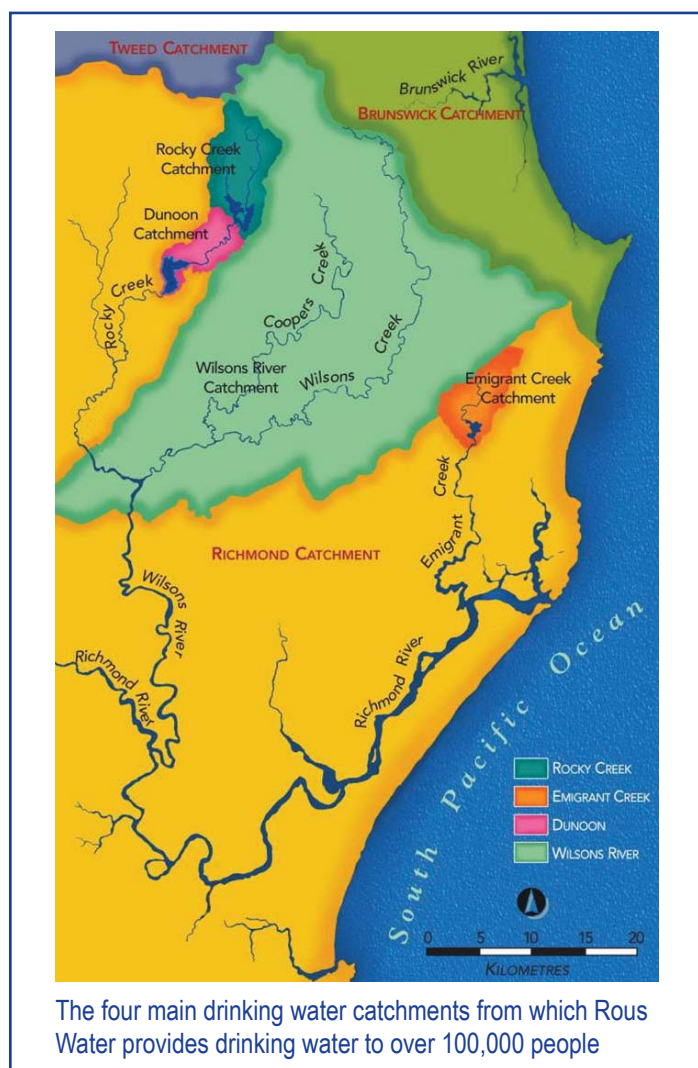
## Introducing the *Rous Water On-site Wastewater Management Guidelines*

Your local council is responsible for monitoring and approving the design, installation and operation of all on-site wastewater management systems, and ensuring that those systems comply with environmental and public health standards.

In addition to your local council's role, Rous Water has a responsibility to promote measures that protect water quality within our regional drinking water catchments. To minimise the risk of on-site wastewater management systems contaminating drinking water, Rous Water has developed new guidelines for on-site wastewater management systems within drinking water catchments.

The *Rous Water On-site Wastewater Management Guidelines* are designed to help people living, intending to live, or developing in a drinking water catchment, to better understand their duty of care in relation to on-site wastewater management.

The guidelines outline strategies for designing and installing a new on-site wastewater management system as well as upgrading an existing system, and establishing an adequate distance between the system and waterways. The basic requirement of the guidelines is that *the closer that an on-site wastewater management system is to a waterway, then the higher is the level of treatment required.*  
*Note: The Rous Water On-site Wastewater Management Guidelines may also apply if you live within 250 m of a groundwater bore that is used for drinking water supply purposes.*



On-site wastewater management systems are inspected by your local council to ensure that they are not having an adverse impact on public health or the surrounding environment. Rous Water is working with councils to undertake more frequent inspections of individual systems in drinking water catchments to ensure compliance with the Rous Water guidelines and protect the regional water supply.

## Further information

If you currently live in, intend to live in, or are developing land in Rous Water's drinking water catchments and require further information regarding on-site wastewater management requirements, contact your local council or Rous Water.



## Contact

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