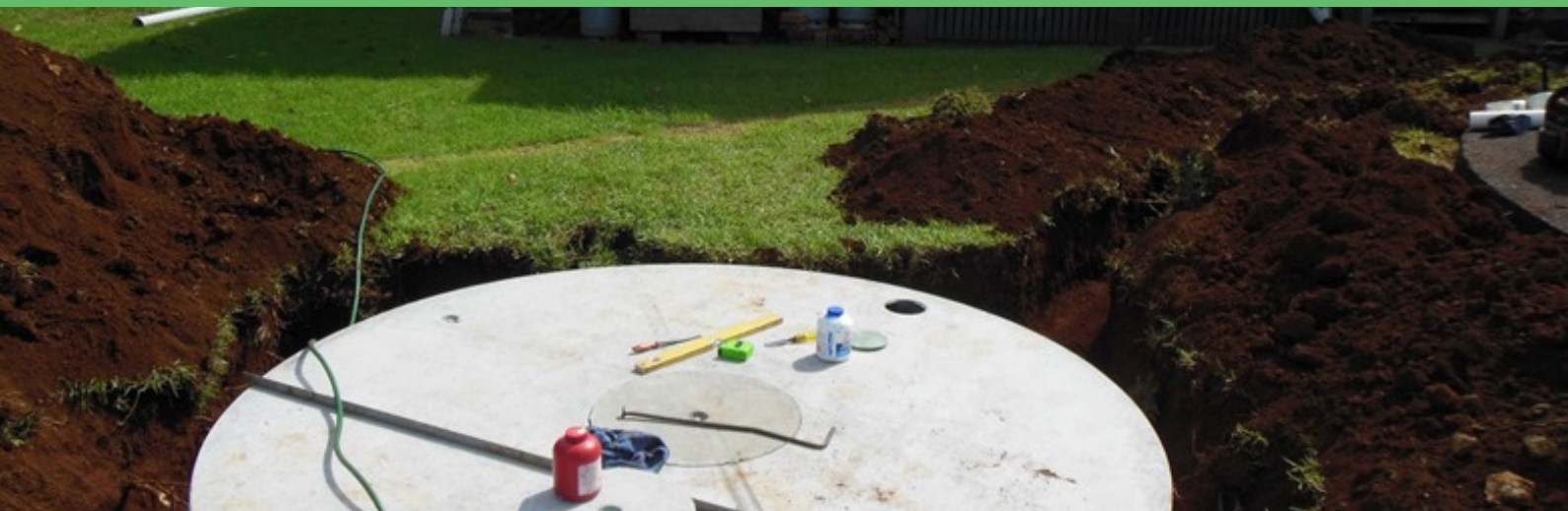


» management of your septic tank

OSSM Factsheet 3

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The effective operation of the septic tank and disposal area will, in part, depend on how it is managed and maintained. A small amount of maintenance work performed regularly can prevent your system from failing. The following is a guide on how to achieve the most from your system.

» Things to do



- Ensure your wastewater system is the appropriate design for the area. Inappropriate systems can pollute the natural environment and pose health risks to humans
- Regularly maintain the disposal area. Long grass and weeds reduce the evapotranspiration efficiency. Cut and remove grass clippings from the disposal area
- Have your septic tank de-sludged every three to five years to prevent sludge build up, which may 'clog' the pipes and absorption trenches
- Prevent the entry of stormwater onto the disposal area by constructing a diversion drain upslope. Direct the stormwater around the disposal area, but not into neighbouring properties
- Ensure your tank is well sealed. This prevents the entry of vermin and mosquitoes
- Conserve Water. The less water you use the drier the disposal area will be, especially through the cooler months
- Check household products for suitability for use with a septic tank. Use biodegradable liquid detergents, with low phosphorous and low sodium

- Have your grease trap (if installed) cleaned out regularly ie 3 monthly
- Know the location and layout of your septic system and disposal area
- Keep a record of pumping, inspections, and other maintenance.

» Things not to do



- Don't allow livestock to graze on the absorption/transpiration area. This can lead to compaction and collapse of the area
- Don't put large quantities of bleaches, disinfectants, whiteners, nappy soakers and spot removers into your septic tank via the sink, washing machine or toilet. These products can kill off the good bacteria needed to breakdown wastewater solids
- Don't allow any foreign materials such as nappies, sanitary napkins, condoms or other hygiene products to enter the system
- Don't put fats and oils down the drain and keep food waste out of your system
- Don't install or use a garbage grinder or spa bath if your system is not designed for it.

See next page for more information ...

»» *What to do if there is a problem with your septic tank or disposal area*

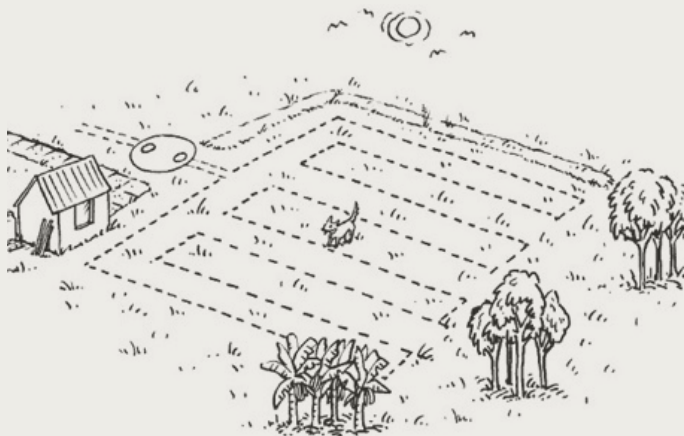
If there is a problem with your septic tank or disposal area that has potential to impact on the environment or public health then you must by law do something about it. Indications of a problem include foul smells from the tank or disposal area, toilets and drains that back up or drain slowly, high water level in the septic tank, no de-sludging of tank in the last 5 years or a wet/soggy disposal area. Do not ignore the problem, it will only get worse and could cost you more money in the long term.

For regulatory advice prior to carrying out any alterations/modifications to existing systems or the installation of a new system you should contact Council.

For operational problems with an existing system you should contact a licensed plumber.



Image: Poorly maintained septic tank



This is a well-maintained absorption area



Don't treat your absorption area like this

»» ***If you have any questions or concerns please contact:***

**Ballina Shire Council, Development and Environmental Health
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