

ON-SITE SEWAGE FACILITIES

INFORMATION FOR LICENSEES

EFFECTIVE MAY 2021

Licensees who design, install or maintain on-site sewage facilities (OSSFs) have an important role to play in the ongoing safety of the community and the environment. Poorly designed, installed and maintained wastewater treatment systems can endanger the health of users, their neighbours, wildlife, domestic and livestock animals, and the environment.

This fact sheet will provide a helpful guide to licensees on the common concerns they may face when performing work on wastewater treatment facilities.

Licensing requirements

Design

A person who prepares plans, specifications or documents associated with on-site domestic waste water management systems for a home owner, manufacturer or local government must hold one of the following QBCC contractor licences if the value¹ of the work exceeds \$1,100:

- plumber and drainer or drainer, provided the designs are for personal use or work performed by the licensee
- builder, provided the designs are for personal use or work performed by the licensee, and they hold an appropriate occupational licence

- hydraulic services design
- building design
- site classifier.

Installation and maintenance

In Queensland, all persons installing or maintaining OSSFs must hold an appropriate occupational licence under the *Plumbing and Drainage Act 2018*.

The occupational licences which are required for installing and maintaining OSSFs are provided in the table below.

The QBCC also issues contractor licences for on-site sewage work. The following contractor licences include on-site sewage work in their scope:

- Plumbing and Drainage
- Drainage
- Drainage — On-site Sewage Facility (maintenance only)
- Drainage — On-site Sewage Facility (maintenance and installation).

OCCUPATIONAL LICENCES UNDER THE <i>PLUMBING AND DRAINAGE ACT 2018</i>	TYPE OF WORK	
	INSTALLATION	MAINTENANCE
Restricted Drainer — On-site Sewage Facility (maintaining on-site sewage facilities)	✘	✓
Restricted Drainer — On-site Sewage Facility (carrying out OSTP ² installation work and maintaining on-site sewage facilities)	✓	✓
Drainer or Provisional Drainer	✓	✘
Drainer or Provisional Drainer with endorsement for maintaining on-site sewage facilities	✓	✓

Common issues

Design issues

There are many factors that a design must consider to ensure it is compliant and appropriate for the site, including:

- site limitations, including soil type, location of structures (e.g. buildings, swimming pools and rainwater tanks) and setback distances
- overland flows and flood zones

- the design's environmental impacts on water sources, wildlife corridors, livestock thoroughfares and vegetation
- the suitability of the system, including operating noise levels and maintenance costs
- ensuring an appropriate level of wastewater treatment is specified, and an appropriate land application system is designed.

1. Value of work, as defined in the *QBCC Act 1991*.

2. OSTP is on-site sewage treatment plant, as defined in the *Plumbing and Drainage Act 2018*.

Installation issues

The installation of an OSSF is a critical factor in the ongoing performance of the system. A system that is not installed in accordance with the design and applicable codes and standards is more likely to fail and impact on public health and safety, amenity and the environment.

Issues with system location

- Owners and installers should be acutely aware of the location of the system and land application areas, especially within drinking water catchments³.
- Designers and installers should provide owners with options for locations, considering the use of land, distances from habitable spaces such as swimming pools, play areas and driveways, any animals and consumable garden spaces, and drinking water catchments.
- The system should be readily accessible for maintenance and council inspection and should be clearly marked to indicate the plant's manufacturer and model number.
- Consider future use and development of the property when looking at options for the installation of the treatment system. The owners may wish to install a swimming pool or driveway in the future.
- The land application area must comply with code requirements and approved plans.

Issues with size and use of system

- Owners and installers must consider the size and use of the system that is being installed. Failure can occur when the system is not appropriately sized for the intended purpose. Failure of the system can lead to serious health and safety issues for the community and the environment.

Approvals

- OSSFs must be installed under a local government permit by an appropriately licensed person. A secondary or advanced secondary on-site sewage treatment plant must also hold a treatment plant approval from the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Energy and Public Works.

Common maintenance concerns

- The operation and maintenance of OSSFs is essential to ensure they continue to perform as required. Those who service OSSFs are responsible for ensuring that the system is operating correctly, and advising the owner or occupier of any concerns.

Common issues with servicing and maintenance for licensees to be aware of include:

- owners and tenants understanding the operating and servicing requirements of their system
- service agents notifying the owner or occupier of operational concerns
- councils being informed that services have been undertaken and should be notified if agreements are stopped
- owners and occupiers retaining service records
- servicing and maintenance need to be carried out in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications.

Helpful information

- The [Queensland Plumbing and Wastewater Code](#) has details on the performance requirements and criteria used to assess on-site sewage treatment and greywater treatment facilities.
- The [Department of Energy and Public Works](#) issues treatment plant approvals for secondary on-site sewage treatment plants to treat sewage from fewer than 21 equivalent persons. The Department of Environment and Science issues approval for systems treating sewage from 21 equivalent persons or more.
- The [State Planning Policy 2017](#) also requires development in water resource catchments and water supply buffer areas to avoid potentially adverse impacts on surface waters and groundwaters, to protect the environmental values of drinking water.
- Where the administering authority is not responsible for drinking water supply, advice on adequate setback distances must be sought from the relevant water authority (such as Seqwater).

3. Water resource catchment is an area where water from rain and run-off is collected by the landscape for harvesting from surface waters or groundwater systems to supply drinking water. Water resource catchments are shown on the State Planning Policy Interactive Mapping System.