

Policy and Information on Grey Water Reuse

The continued drought conditions that most of Australia has experienced of late and the fact that these weather patterns are likely to continue in the future has made many house-holders look at new and innovative ways of saving water and re-using waste water. One area that has received a lot of publicity is domestic grey water reuse. The Department of Health has responded to the many enquiries from the community regarding the re-use of waste water by granting permission for the re-use of grey water either by a temporary or permanent nature. *For more information visit the Department of Health website; <http://www.db.sa.gov.au/pehs/envirom-health-index.htm>*

There are two systems approved by the Department of Health for grey water re-use within South Australia:

DIVERTER SYSTEM

This system takes waste water from the laundry, showers and basins (kitchen wastes are excluded) into a sub-surface soakage trench laid throughout garden areas. A minimum allotment size of 1500m² is required along with a soil percolation test provided by an engineer to confirm that the soil on the allotment is suitable for waste water disposal. The approximate cost of this type of system is \$2000 and needs to be installed by a licensed plumber.

AEROBIC WASTE WATER SYSTEM

An aerobic grey water treatment system consists of a separate drain running from the laundry, showers and basins (kitchen wastes are excluded) to the treatment plant. All other waste pipes are connected to a conventional septic tank which in turn is connected to Council's Septic Tank Effluent Drainage Scheme (STEDS).

An overflow from the treatment plant is also connected to Council's STEDS. The grey water collected by the system is treated onsite and discharged to a minimum surface irrigation area of 166m². The treatment plant requires a 240v power to operate and will also require four services per year. The approximate cost of one of these units is \$8000.

In addition to the expense of installing one of these systems, there are also servicing and electricity costs in the maintaining of an aerobic grey water system.

To install either of these systems:

- Approach Council in the first instance to provide full details of intended installation of system;
- Should Council consent to the proposal a formal application is to be lodged with the Department of Health;
- Each application is considered on a case by case basis as not all allotments will be suitable for these types of systems.

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Council is heavily committed to recycling waste water. Septic tank effluent from the townships of Mt Barker, Littlehampton, Nairne and Brukunga is directed to Council's treatment plant at Springs Road, Mt Barker. Here, the effluent is treated to A grade quality before being discharged to the Laratinga Wetlands, which provides a habitat for many varied flora and fauna species.

The water is reused in several other ways including: watering of parks and gardens in nearby housing estates; use in Council's dust suppression programme; and for irrigation by market gardeners on Bald Hills Road. Additionally, this recycled water is being used by contractors in dust suppression in the development of new housing estates in our Council area. There is also a proposal to make this recycled waste water available to some residents in the future. Also, the treated effluent from the township of Echunga is directed to the nearby golf course for watering of the course during the summer months and in Macclesfield, the treated septic tank effluent from the oxidation lagoons is used to water the adjoining vineyards.

Council projects like those outlined above provide a cost effective and safe way to recycle wastewater in comparison to individual wastewater treatment and reuse options on private properties, which are expensive for the land owner and can be a risk to health if systems are not properly maintained and operated.

It is Council's belief that householders who want to participate in a positive way in the current water re-use discussions would be better served by installing rain water tanks for collecting and re-using rain water run-off. The installation of a rain water tank with a capacity of at least 5,000 litres would assist greatly in the watering of the garden during the summer months as well as providing a source for making an excellent cup of tea or coffee. Additionally, the plumbing of this rain water tank into the house for toilet, laundry, shower and kitchen use provides year round benefits. The State government as well as some Councils are providing financial incentives to householders to install rain water tanks.

For additional information on grey water reuse and the installation of a rain water tank within the District Council of Mount Barker area please contact one of Council's Environmental Health Department staff members.

Contact Council for more details

Environmental Health Officers 8391 7200

The District Council of Mount Barker
23 Mann St, PO Box 54, Mount Barker SA 5251

