



Sullage System Fact Sheet

How does a sullage system work?

A sullage system disposes of the domestic waste from kitchens (via a grease trap), baths, showers, basins and laundries. The water pumped from the greywater sullage tank will either travel to an irrigation trench, bed system or a greywater purple sullage hose, where it is irrigated onto the lawn or paddock, being the land application area.

A sullage system has three main parts:

- black water septic tank that retains any organic matter and solids from the toilet only;
- grease trap, a small tank, usually installed close to the kitchen to take greywater from the kitchen sink and prevent grease entering the system; and
- greywater sullage tank, a tank with a submersible pump toward the bottom which pumps out the cleaner water, while retaining the silt and dirt particles (called sludge).



All systems must be designed in accordance with AS/NZS 1547 On-site Domestic Wastewater Management, together with the Queensland Plumbing and Wastewater Code. Sullage systems are no longer approved in Queensland and existing sullage systems must be maintained to ensure the system does not

create a nuisance or pose a health risk to the surrounding area.

Sullage System Tips

If too much water is flushed into the septic tank in a short period of time, the wastewater flows out of the tank before it has had time to separate. The trenches or beds can become clogged from an overflow of sludge or scum from the septic tank.

Kitchen waste (grease, food particles and water) flows out of your kitchen sink and enters the grease trap. As grease floats, it can become trapped within the grease trap. Once the fat has accumulated in the grease trap (if it is not emptied), it will begin to block up the outlet pipe, encourage vermin, cause bad odours and eventually overflow. Cleaning the grease trap regularly helps prevent the grease from accumulating on the walls and baffles.

The sludge accumulates at the bottom of the greywater sullage tank and as such, it will eventually submerge the pump in sludge, causing blockages and pump breakdown or burnout. The more accumulated sludge in the sullage tank, the greater the foul smell that will emanate.

Sullage System Maintenance

On-site sewage facilities need regular maintenance to ensure they operate in a safe and effective manner. Poorly maintained and malfunctioning systems can impact public health, the environment and property value.

- ensure the system is not overloaded by excessive numbers of people using it;
- avoid anti-bacterial products and using only septic safe products;
- move the greywater sullage hose around the property frequently;

- engage a licensed liquid waste contractor to desludge the septic tank unit every three to five (3-5) years;
- engage a licensed liquid waste contractor to desludge the grease trap every twelve (12) months;
- engage a licensed liquid waste contractor to desludge the greywater sullage tank every twelve (12) months;
- ensure the land application area has the grass mowed and plants maintained;
- take reasonable steps to keep all plumbing and drainage on the property in a good condition;
- ensure the system does not create a nuisance or pose a health risk to the surrounding areas.



Follow these guidelines to keep your grease trap in good condition:

- use strainers in the sink;
- wipe grease out of pans before washing;
- don't pour oils down the sink;
- use septic safe cleaners;
- repair leaking taps;
- don't leave taps running unnecessarily;
- don't put any harsh antibacterial chemicals down the kitchen sink;
- don't cover the grease trap;
- don't plant any shrubs or trees near the grease trap as the roots can enter the system and cause blockages and cracks;

- have your grease trap pumped out on a regular basis.

Complaints can arise from wastewater trenches overflowing, unpleasant smells and wastewater running into neighbouring properties. All these issues present a serious health risk for the community and need attending to immediately.

Care should be taken to ensure that wastewater remain within the property. The failure of a sullage system is often caused by one or a combination of the following:

- overflowing land application area;
- odours from the system;
- blockages (i.e. tree roots);
- essential bacteria killed by household cleaning chemicals;
- damaged structural components;
- failed mechanical components, including pumps;
- leaching into groundwater;
- failure to meet effluent quality standards;
- excessive water use;
- lack of system maintenance.

Owners and occupiers of a property where a sullage system is installed are responsible for maintaining the system in good working order. This will safeguard the health of persons occupying the premises.

If the system is not performing or is creating a health hazard, Council will require the system to be repaired or replaced. It is the owners/occupiers responsibility to report to Council if a sullage system appears to be malfunctioning.


Where can I get more information?

For further information please contact Council's Customer Service Team on 1300 79 49 29.


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