District Council of
Loxton Waikerie

Community Wastewater Management System (CWMS)

What is CWMS?

CWMS is a system designed to collect and treat wastewater from properties through a shared network of gravity and pump mains, as well as pumping stations. It is designed to gather, treat, and either reuse or dispose of the liquid effluent from septic tanks on individual properties.

As the manager of the CWMS infrastructure, the council oversees the operation, maintenance, upgrading, and replacement of the system within the district.

Properties in the townships of Loxton, Waikerie, Moorook, and Kingston on Murray are connected to the CWMS.

How do Septic Tanks Work?

Septic tanks function by storing sewage in a two-chambered tank. Bacterial activity breaks down the solids, while baffles hold back sludge, grease, and scum, allowing water to flow out of the tank into the CWMS. This system consists of pipes and pumping stations that transport the effluent from septic tanks to a treatment facility. Over time, sludge builds up in the tank, reducing the space for efficient biological processes and eventually causing sludge and solids to overflow into the council's pipes and drains, which are intended to carry water, not sewerage.

Desludging Septic Tanks

As part of maintaining the Community Wastewater Management System (CWMS), council offers a septic tank desludging program.

To prevent sludge from entering council drains, contractors visit properties on a scheduled basis to remove the accumulated sludge from the tanks. This is part of ongoing maintenance, not an emergency service for plumbing blockages.

Property owners are responsible for maintaining their septic tanks and drains. The desludging program supports the overall CWMS and does not replace the need to call a plumber for blockages.



Some common questions about CWMS are answered here:

Where is my septic tank?

Council may have a copy of a septic tank plan of your property that may be of assistance to you. If not, you may need to contact a plumber to help you find it.

I have sewerage backing up in my drains. I checked my septic and it is full, can you come and pump it out?

No, septic tanks always appear full. They work by remaining full and forming a crust on the surface that keeps air out, allowing specific bacteria to thrive (hence the term "septic"). Each time you flush a toilet or drain a bath, an equal amount of water exits the tank and flows into the council drain. If you experience blockages before the tank, you should contact a plumber.

What if the blockage is in the council drain?

To determine if a blockage is on your property or council's, check the inspection opening at your property boundary. If the pipe is full at this inspection point, the council drain is blocked, and you should contact the council to report it. Council staff will attend to clear the blockage in the street or lane. If the inspection point is dry or there is water flow, the blockage is on your property, and it is your responsibility to hire and pay for a plumber to fix it.

I can't find an inspection opening at my boundary.

Council staff can advise you of the location of your connection point. It's your responsibility to ensure there is an inspection opening at the surface level on your property boundary. If landscaping has buried it over time, you should hire a plumber to bring it back to ground level. Likewise, the septic tank should also be kept accessible

I live out of the town; can Council pump my tank out?

No, if your property is not connected to the CWMS, managing effluent disposal is your responsibility. Tanks that discharge effluent into onsite soakage drains still require regular desludging (at your expense), as sludge entering the soakage area can eventually cause the soakage bed to fail, which can be costly to repair. It's recommended to consult your plumber about this.

How often will my septic tank be desludged?

The desludging program, established over 10 years ago, divides larger towns into three or four segments or catchment areas, allowing the truck to work efficiently, moving through streets systematically rather than responding to random locations. It is intended to cover each area or town within a four-year cycle, though factors such as staffing, truck maintenance, and the availability of sludge disposal sites can affect the program's schedule.

How can Council enter my property and do this work?

Under the Local Government Act 1999 and the Public & Environmental Health Act 1987, the council has the legal authority to enter your property and perform any necessary work related to the maintenance and operation of its CWMS. If your septic tank is faulty or not easily accessible, the council can issue a formal order requiring you to upgrade or replace the tank or make the lids accessible, all at your own expense.