



# LAND CAPABILITY ASSESSMENTS

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**If you plan to install a septic tank system/domestic wastewater treatment system you may need to first provide a Land Capability Assessment to Council.**

## **What is a Land Capability Assessment?**

A Land Capability Assessment (LCA ) is a report, prepared by a suitably qualified person, which you may need to submit to Council if you plan to use an on-site wastewater management system such as a septic tank system to treat wastewater on a residential development in an unsewered area.

The LCA must comply with Environment Protection Authority criteria as outlined in EPA Information Bulletin 746 and will

- Demonstrate to Council if the site is capable of sustainably managing within allotment boundaries all domestic wastewater likely to be generated by the proposed development; and
- Provide a management program that will need to be put in place (and sustained) to ensure that the health and environmental impacts of on-site wastewater management are minimised.

## **Why is an LCA needed?**

LCAs provide information that enables Council to identify the key site and soil features of the land and any constraints that the land has for on-site wastewater management. This helps Council determine if an appropriate management program has been recommended for the proposed development. A satisfactory LCA can be the key to Council approving a Planning Permit application or an application for a Permit to Install a Septic Tank System, although submission of an LCA does not necessarily ensure that a development can proceed.

## What should the LCA contain?

The LCA should contain:

- General information about the site, such as the area and property title details, locality, water supply, nature of the development and estimated maximum potential wastewater load;
- A scaled plan showing, as a minimum, contours, boundaries, location of dams and watercourses within and near the site, location of any buildings and other proposed uses of the land e.g. driveways, tennis courts, pools etc., the location of the wastewater treatment system, and the area to be allocated for the application of effluent;
- A description of the nature of the key site and soil features, including
  - site drainage
  - runoff
  - flooding or inundation potential
  - exposure
  - landform
  - erosion potential
  - vegetation
  - proximity to dams and watercourses
  - local climate and aspect of the site
  - slope %
  - landslip
  - groundwater (seasonal water table depth)
  - rock outcrop %
  - soil profile characteristics
  - soil permeability
  - average rainfall (mm/yr)
  - pan evaporation (mm/yr);
- A table that lists these features and gives a rating for each in terms of the degree to which the characteristic could affect or limit the capability of the site for on-site wastewater management. The worst rating for an individual feature determines the overall site rating;
- This overall rating provides the land capability of the site and allows the person preparing the report to recommend a management program, which includes the type of wastewater system that could be used, and method of applying the effluent to the land. The recommended method should make reference to appropriate Codes and Standards such as the EPA Septic Tank Code of Practice 2003 and Australian Standard AS-1547 2000 where applicable;
- Recommendations for land application of the effluent should be based on a water balance calculation which takes into account the climate of the area (amount of rainfall and evaporation data), the design wastewater flow, the absorption capacity of the soil and transpiration rate of vegetation to be planted on the effluent field (crop factor); and
- A worksheet showing a log of all test pits.

An example of a “model” LCA is available for perusal at the Council Offices.

## **LCA Requirements in Potable Catchment Areas**

An LCA is required when submitting a planning permit application and/or septic tank application within a proclaimed potable water supply catchment. This is considered essential in order to comply with the requirements of the *Environment Protection Act* and *SEPP* in relation to assessing cumulative impacts of additional on-site wastewater management systems and being able to relax the 1:40 hectare provision.

The Pyrenees Shire's *Domestic Wastewater Management Plan 2015-18* outlines the following requirements for Individual Land Capability Assessments if you live within a Potable Catchment Area which follows the EPA's *Code of Practice – Onsite Wastewater Management* for the minimum requirements for the preparation of a Land Capability Assessment.

All areas with a High, Medium or Low soil-risk rating that are within a declared potable catchment area require an LCA to be conducted to the level outlined in the EPA's *Code of Practice – Onsite Wastewater Management*. A better than best practice approach is required for lots with a 'high' risk rating. For all Township allotments within catchments the LCA requirements for High Land-Soil Risk Areas should be applied, regardless of the mapped Land-Soil Risk category.

## **Who should carry out the LCA?**

The preparation of a LCA requires a range of skills and should be produced to a high standard to meet the requirements of Council. The LCA should be prepared by an appropriately qualified and experienced professional in the environmental, geotechnical, soil science and/or wastewater consulting field. Owners are advised to ensure that assessors have the appropriate qualifications, accreditation and experience and have Professional Indemnity Insurance cover.

## **For subdivisions**

Council may require that a LCA be undertaken for each allotment for a proposed subdivision in an unsewered area. The assessment for each allotment must clearly define both an appropriate building envelope and primary and reserve effluent disposal envelopes, together with recommended programs for wastewater management.

## **Further information**

For more information contact Council's Environmental Health Officer on 5349 1100.

More information on LCAs generally is available from the EPA website [www.epa.vic.gov.au](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au) and EPA Publications 746 and 891.