



# **ATTACHMENT 10.2.1**

## **Mansfield Shire Domestic Wastewater Management Plan Internal Audit Executive Summary**

**(5 PAGES)**

**INDEPENDENT AUDIT OF THE  
MANSFIELD SHIRE COUNCIL  
DOMESTIC WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN  
ADOPTED AUGUST 2014**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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Appointed by: Goulburn Valley Water, as agreed by Mansfield Shire  
Council and Goulburn Murray Water  
Date: 30 January 2017

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

I was appointed by Goulburn Valley Water (GVW), with the agreement of Council and Goulburn Murray Water (GMW) to undertake an independent audit of the implementation of the Mansfield Shire Domestic Wastewater Management Plan 2014 (DWMP) in relation to the following:

- progress of implementation of the DWMP's Action Plan for Year 1 as outlined in Section 10 of the adopted DWMP, noting that evidence about the progress on actions for Years 2 – 4 will also be considered
- audit against the requirements of the Ministerial Guidelines for Planning Permit Applications in Open, Potable Water Supply Catchment Areas (DEPI, November 2012)
- audit against the requirements of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Council, GVW and GMW dated 9 November 2015.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The terms of reference for this audit were agreed to via email correspondence by Council, GVW and GMW on 18 November 2016.

Council officers were requested to collate evidence to demonstrate the work undertaken for Year 1 of the Action Plan.

Prior to meeting with Council officers prepared a spreadsheet based on the Action Plan that included commentary around the status of the action, an explanation of the progress made and, where relevant, the things that were impeding the progress of the action.

A meeting was held on 14 December 2016, between 10am – 1pm with Michael Bismire (Development Services Manager), Kevin Murphy (Senior Environmental Health Officer) and Sarah Rau (Development Services Administrative Support Officer).

Based on the evidence provided at this meeting, the Council spreadsheet was amended to include sections for the evidence provided by Council during the audit along with my comments and an overall status summary of progress on the action. I also prepared a spreadsheet to analyse the progress of actions against the MOU and Ministerial Guidelines.

The progress of actions has been categorised as follows:

- Action completed/Action completed for Year 1 – which represents those actions that are complete for the life of the DWMP or where the action is a recurring one during every year of the life of the Plan
- On track – where the action is progressing as it should for Year 1 of the Plan
- Action requiring review – Council, GMW and GVW entered into the MOU around a year after the DWMP Action Plan was adopted by Council. The

contents of the MOU has made some actions obsolete. There are other actions which, upon reflection two years after the adoption of the DWMP, are also obsolete as the policy landscape has changed or the parties to the MOU agree that the action is no longer required

- Behind schedule – where a Year 1 action has either not commenced or where it is only partially complete.

These draft documents were provided to Council Officers to allow a right of reply on 19 December 2016. Email correspondence from Michael Bismire was received on 21 December 2016 that the draft audit reflected the evidence presented and discussion at the audit meeting.

The audit documents were then forwarded to Mr Alan Tyson (GVW) and Mr Neil Repacholi (GMW) on 22 December 2016.

At the request of the water corporations a meeting between Council, GMW and GVW was held to discuss the audit on 18 January 2017. In addition to providing an overview of the progress of the DWMP's implementation, as per the terms of reference, the following issues were discussed:

- the water corporations were concerned about the rating of the progress of actions relating to proactive enforcement activities and the effective monitoring of systems, as required by the Ministerial Guidelines, noting that the 100 inspections have been undertaken at Goughs Bay in mid 2016 yet there has not been progress in terms of analysing their findings nor in informing land owners of whether or not remedial action is required
- GMW clarified that the training session for local experts as per Action 6.5.1 has not been undertaken – a workshop was held in Shepparton, however only one person operating within the Shire attended
- it was agreed by all parties that a number of actions were now obsolete or had been superseded by the 2015 MOU and could therefore be identified as such, with no further action required
- agreement was reached around the methodology for water quality sampling of Lake Eildon under Action 5.1.3
- until the State government shows a genuine commitment to funding sewerage backlog schemes all parties agree that actions relating to capital works for the extension of reticulated services or community wastewater management systems be suspended.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The table below summarises the progress of actions against the Action Plan, MOU and Ministerial Guidelines:

Relevant document	Completed	Action requires review or is superseded by MOU	On track	Behind schedule
DWMP Action Plan	21	8	6	25
MOU	1		3	2
Ministerial Guidelines	4			2

The areas where good progress has been made by Council include:

- consistent and streamlined planning referrals
- provision of LCA templates for public use, which has in turn increased the quality of LCAs being received by Council and anecdotal evidence was provided that there is greater land owner awareness of the potential difficulties and costs of treating onsite wastewater when building/renovating on small unsewered lots
- launch of the DWMP
- education around the DWMP and wastewater issues for Council Planners, Engineers and Councillors
- development of planning scheme amendment documentation for a local planning policy on managing wastewater and amended overlay controls
- coordination of strategic, statutory and wastewater management functions at Council, GMW and GVW.

The themes where the majority of actions are running behind schedule are related to:

- improved database integration and creation to support monitoring and compliance programs
- improved use of GIS capabilities to capture risk data, LCA ratings and the location of existing on site systems (ie proactive monitoring and enforcement)
- public education, including training for local LCA consultants and on site system installers/technicians
- identification of infrastructure required to service growth communities and mitigate wastewater risks.

It is noted that the DWMP Action Plan was worded in a way which broke down each theme into smaller sub tasks, identifying the resources required to successfully implement each component.

Unfortunately in relation to the mapping and data capture themes, the resources identified in the DWMP have not been forthcoming. This means that valuable data is

either being lost or alternatively the capture of that data in the future will become very inefficient and even more resource intensive. It is suggested that there are some quick and easy systems that can be established within Council to start to capture this data on its GIS mapping system and that this should be a priority for action.

The water corporations were particularly concerned that only part of the process for proactive enforcement has been completed by Council in the form of 100 inspections at Goughs Bay. Again, the resources required by the Action Plan have not been allocated to provide for the review of the inspection forms to identify whether or not action is required by the land owner to address a system fault, or of more concern, where untreated effluent is escaping a site.

Overall, there is little to be gained out of undertaking the proactive inspections required by the Action Plan, MOU and Ministerial Guidelines if the findings are not communicated to the land owner, not only to ensure broken systems are fixed, but as a means of educating landowners about the need to regularly maintain their system (which in the long run costs less than fixing a system with major issues) avoid potential public health issues and environmental damage.

The real risk to Council is that if the proactive inspection/enforcement tasks are not seen through to the end, the water corporations could justifiably reinstate the 1:40ha dwelling density, as this has been the core issue around wastewater management for the past 7 years. The reintroduction of this requirement would significantly curb future growth.

Overall, however, it is clear that the relationship between Council, GMW and GVW is significantly improved.

There have been significant benefits in the development and roll out of the standard LCA templates for Council, LCA experts and landowners alike. The Environmental Health Unit has prepared community information sheets which, once widely distributed, will raise awareness around the importance of onsite system maintenance.

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1 February 2017