

Onsite Wastewater Management in Sandy Point

Issues Paper on Wastewater / Bores Setback Distances

Prepared by the Sandy Point Community Group, 16 January 2015

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This paper has been prepared by the Sandy Point Community Group (SPCG), and outlines a number of concerns relating to onsite wastewater systems and bores that are affecting the Sandy Point community. The key issue for the community is the impractical and in most cases unachievable nominal minimum setback distance of 20m between effluent disposal areas (subsurface irrigation) and groundwater bores (non-potable supply).

The SPCG has been advocating for this issue for nearly two years, however as yet there has been no resolution, and the issue is continuing to have significant impacts on the community.

The report first provides background and some context to the situation, a description of the issue, and describes the stakeholders involved. It then outlines key issues and the social, environmental and economic implications of the situation, and proposes some short-term and longer term actions and possible solutions that could be taken.

This paper is directed at decision makers – the South Gippsland Shire Council (SGSC), the Victorian Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), policymakers and other relevant stakeholders – and attempts to contribute some clarity to the situation. It is our hope that the community group, on behalf of the Sandy Point community, can work together with decision makers towards a practical resolution that will give certainty to residents whilst ensuring public health and environmental protection.

1.2 Sandy Point Township

Sandy Point is located in South Gippsland, approximately 2.5 hours South-East from Melbourne, near Wilsons Promontory (see Figure 1).

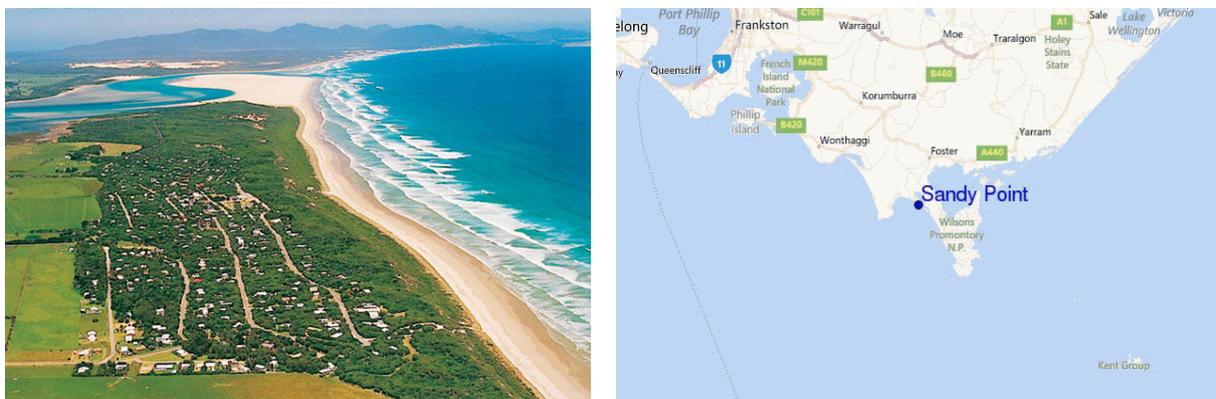


Figure 1. Sandy Point aerial and map location

Until the late 1950's, Sandy Point was only farmland. The township was developed around

1957 and the first township blocks were sold in the summer of 1957/58. Water was initially supplied by small rain water tanks, but it was soon realised that a reliable supply of bore water was easily obtained. As the area of the town is predominately old sand dunes, the water quality was good and the vast majority of properties depended on bore water for their main drinking and other water supply, with many also installing a small rainwater tank for drinking water. This continued until the 1990's when the SGSC erected signage stating that the bore water was unsuitable for drinking. It is understood that this was in response to the potential for litigation, rather than any problem with the quality of the ground water. Many residents took this to mean there was a potential risk using bore water, and since that time the majority of properties have installed a large rainwater tank as their main source of water, supplemented by bore water for use outside the house and in many cases, toilet flushing.

Some background relating to the town is summarised below.

Town development

- Permanent population of 197 (in 2011)
- 89% of dwellings not permanently occupied (holiday homes / rentals)
- 779 developed lots, including 646 (83% of lots) that are under 1000 m² (see Table 1)

Table 1. Range of lot sizes in Sandy Point (source: Draft Domestic Wastewater Plan (SGSC 2015))

Lot size (m ²)	No. properties	% of properties
<500	22	2.8%
500 – 1000	624	80.2%
1000-2000	82	10.5%
2000-10,000	51	6.5%

- 106 undeveloped lots (12% of lots)
- Dwellings are a range of types, from simple beach shacks to more elaborate houses

Water and waste water

- No sewerage or reticulated water systems – septic tanks and rainwater tanks are used, supplemented by private groundwater bores for non-potable uses
- There is some anecdotal evidence bores may occasionally be used for topping up tanks, although the extent to which this occurs is not known. To the best of our knowledge there have not been any cases of illness having been caused by the human consumption of bore water at Sandy Point.

Soil and groundwater

- Sandy soils of varying grades (fine through to coarse sand)
- In some areas, impervious soil layers may exist between sand layers and provide some protection of deeper groundwater from wastewater incursion (SGSC 2015a)
- The groundwater is assumed to be of good quality; some SGSC reports have suggested that it may be deteriorating due to onsite wastewater systems, but the SPCG has not seen results of testing and understands the groundwater to be uncontaminated, based on previous testing and anecdotal evidence
- Groundwater is affected by salt water tides (rising and falling periodically)
- The groundwater depths range from 1.5m to over 15m below ground level
- A conceptual diagram of a typical coastal system such as Sandy Point is provided in Figure 2 for illustrative purposes

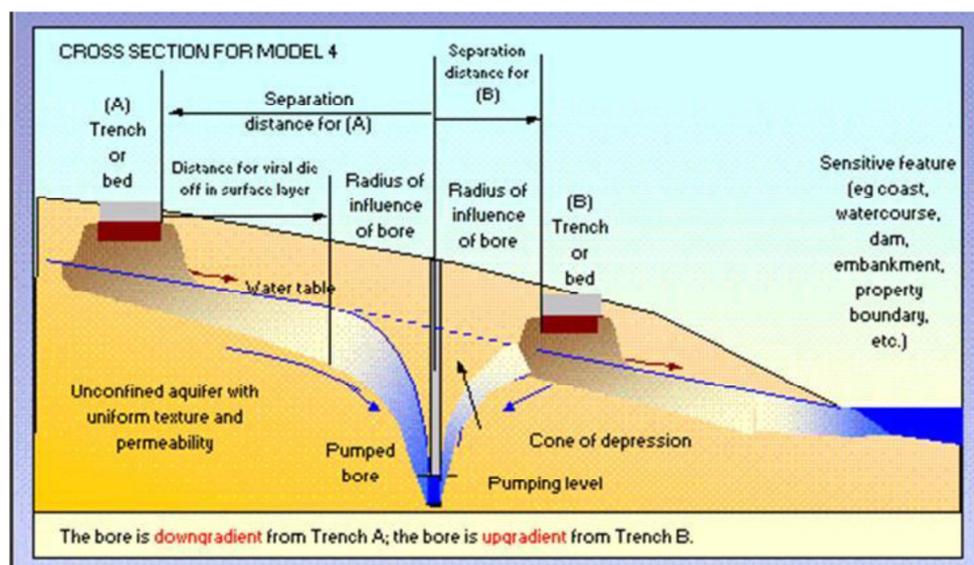


Figure 2. Conceptual model of wastewater / groundwater interactions in typical sandy coastal area (source: Draft Domestic Wastewater Plan, SGSC 2015a)

1.3 Relevant Stakeholders

Our understanding of the responsibilities and interests of different parties with respect to planning decisions, and water / wastewater and environmental management, is given in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Stakeholders

Party	Responsibility / interest
Sandy Point property owners	Responsible for maintaining septic tanks / onsite wastewater systems Provide own drinking water (tank) Maintain own (non-potable) bores
Sandy Point Community Group (SPCG)	Represent and advocate on behalf of members and community on issues that affect them
South Gippsland Shire Council (SGSC)	Issue wastewater and building permits / approves wastewater plans Sets local requirements (system types, setbacks etc.) Responsible for town planning decisions
Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)	Provides guidance on onsite domestic WW management (Code of Practice including setbacks) Approves overarching wastewater system types for Victoria Works with local government Responsible for environmental compliance
Department of Health (DOH)	Implementing drinking water quality legislation and guidelines Responsible for public health
Southern Rural Water (SRW)	Issues permits for the extraction of groundwater
West Gippsland CMA	Responsible for surface water resources / catchment management
South Gippsland Water (SGW)	None at present (through responsible for planning and prioritising future sewage / water systems)

2 Current Situation

2.1 Current Wastewater and Bore Water Situation

As there is no reticulated water supply to the town, water for drinking and internal household use is normally supplied by a rain water tank, and most properties have a bore which may be used for toilet flushing, garden watering, car and boat wash down.

There is no reticulated sewerage system in the township, and all properties must have onsite wastewater disposal, comprising of septic tanks and / or advanced treatment systems and an effluent disposal area / underground trenches. The current requirements for new houses and renovations is for a Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) to advanced secondary standard, and subsurface irrigation, with an EPA requirement for a minimum setback of 20m between the dispersal field and any water bore. With most blocks this setback distance simply cannot be achieved. According to the Draft Domestic Wastewater Plan (SGSC, 2015a), the estimated required area for effluent is 800 m², meaning that 646 lots (lots under 1000 m², or 83% of lots) are affected¹.

The need for secondary treatment with disinfection was added approximately two years ago, along with the enforcement of the 20m setback. As far as the SPCG is aware, this was not driven by a change in conditions or water quality in Sandy Point, as we believe that there were no changes to conditions and have not seen any reports or evidence demonstrating such a change.

It is also noted that at the time, authorities became aware of the location of a number of bores that were not previously registered on their databases (see Figure 3).

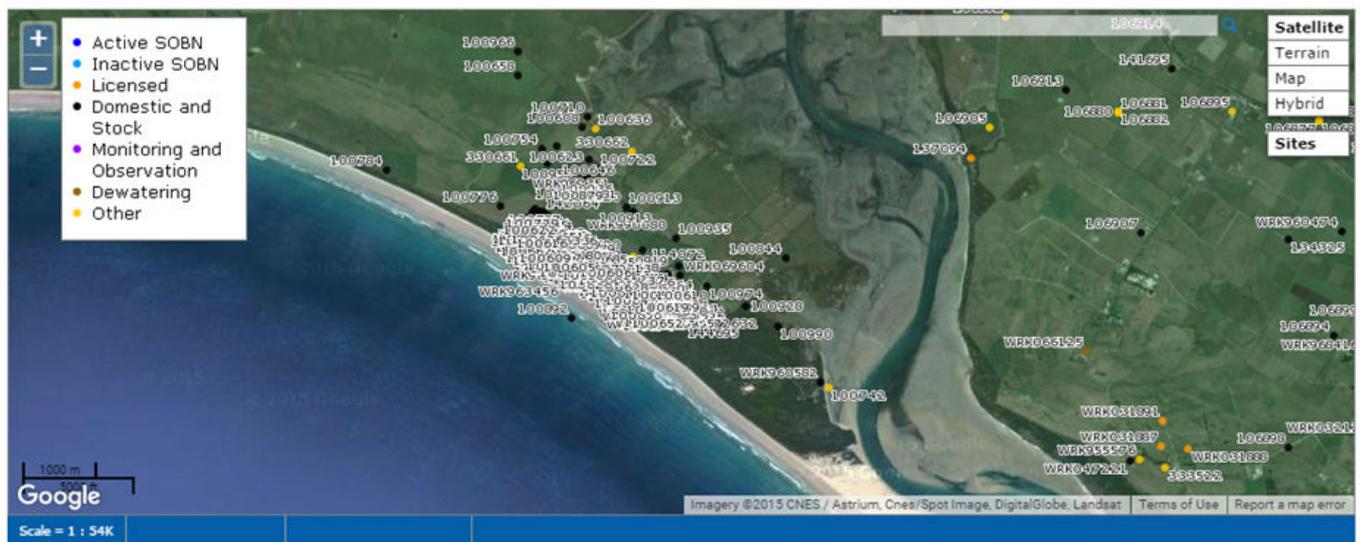


Figure 3. Bore database, Sandy Point township (source: DELWP Groundwater sites website)

¹ Allowing 200 m² for buildings

Maintaining this requirement for a 20m setback distance leads to a range of potential issues, including:

1. **Development has slowed** considerably and some people are having great difficulty in obtaining a planning/building/sewerage permit due to conditions imposed by Council.
2. Impact on **property values** and development cost burdens – inability to sell vacant land.
3. **Uncertainty for landholders** wishing to develop.
4. Replacing an old (possibly failing) septic tank with a modern STP is extremely difficult, as the new system must comply with the 20m rule. A new system with subsurface irrigation that disposes of effluent in the topsoil for uptake by plants / evapotranspiration is much less likely to add to pollution of the environment than an old septic tank, in which case this rule would actually **prevent a better environmental outcome**.
5. In some cases, the solution has been for the property owner to pay to have the bore on an adjoining property relocated to the other side of their block (at a cost of around \$3,000) but this is not a long term solution as it only **shifts the problem somewhere else**.
6. The advice from Council to negotiate with adjoining land owners to decommission or relocate existing bores, has created angst for property owners as some neighbours are unwilling to co-operate, contributing to **tensions between landholders** around negotiating to decommission or relocate bores on adjacent properties in order for a landholder to obtain a wastewater permit.

Additional impacts (social, environmental and economic) resulting from the situation are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of social, environmental and economic impacts

Social	Environmental	Economic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social cohesion has always been a strong feature of Sandy Point but disputes are occurring as a result of some property owners refusing, understandably, to decommission or relocate their bore to assist a neighbour to build/renovate. • One block currently on the market has bores on either side and neither of the neighbours are prepared to relocate their bores. This block therefore is currently virtually worthless. • The impact on people of stress from reduced property prices / inability to build or get permits / financial burden. • The lack of certainty for landholders about the future direction of systems and what the requirements will be causes stress and prevents people from being able to plan accordingly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groundwater must be protected, but the risk from ageing / unmaintained wastewater systems is far greater than newer, higher treatment standard systems to which the current rules are being applied • Replacing an old style septic tank is currently extremely difficult – there is a disincentive to upgrade old systems and therefore an increased risk of pollution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in being able to build at all on some blocks. • If able to build, the size and design of a desired house often needs to be altered to meet the setback provisions (many blocks are only 550/600 m² in area). • Many existing homes are very old and require renovation. Once again the ability to renovate at all or the extent of a renovation can be severely hampered. • Real estate prices in Sandy Point have dropped 20% at a time when the real estate market generally has been very strong – prices in Waratah Bay, only a few kilometres away (which was sewered in approx. 2012), have been rising substantially (refer to Appendix B) • Local agents are reporting that this issue is preventing many potential buyers from buying in Sandy Point (ref. Appendix B). Some are concerned that even if they can build on a vacant block a premium STP is expensive and are concerned that if reticulated sewerage is connected in a few years they will have further substantial expense. • Owners of vacant blocks are already paying a premium in rates as an incentive to develop the lots, yet the current rules make it difficult to build. • Improved properties have a higher value, therefore providing Council with increased rate revenue. • Economic activity is being affected as the current rules are severely hampering building activity. This impacts not only local builders and tradespeople, but has a flow-on effect e.g. the local General Store and Café.

Appendix B contains a number of testimonials from community members, business owners and builders who are affected, which outline the impact that the issue is having on different stakeholders, and provides further evidence to support the statements made above.

2.2 Key Concerns about Current Setback Rules of the SPCG

The SPCG would like to point out a number of important aspects that we believe should be considered by SPCG / EPA when looking at opportunities for resolution of this issue:

1. Although the setback rule was introduced in 2003, we understand that councils have the discretion to reduce this distance where it considers the risk to public health and the environment is negligible (Ref: Code of Practice on Waste Water Management 2013 EPA 3.9 Setback distances). Therefore, we understand that SGSC has authority to consider changes to the setback, taking all factors into account.
2. It appears the EPA has adopted the results of a study by the Sydney Catchment Authority regarding the installation of STPs in a drinking water catchment to develop their policy (Ref: Code of Practice on Waste Water Management 2013 EPA) 3.9 Setback distances). As Sandy Point is not in a drinking water catchment, and the bore water is classed as non-potable and is not used for drinking, it would appear that the 20m setback is not justified in this case. It is logical that the requirements for non-potable bores should be less stringent than for potable bores.
3. Further, the nominal setbacks are based on studies from other locations with different soil types, without consideration of the local soil types present at Sandy Point.
4. It is noted that the Western Australia code of practice allows a 10m setback for garden bores (WA Gov. 2011, page 43, Appendix V, Table 1). A reduction of the setback distance could enable development on many properties, and would provide at least a partial solution to the current problem. Note that the WA code also allows for reduction of irrigation areas in sandy soils (refer to page 26).
5. Some documents (e.g. SPCG 2015a and 2015b) refer to the risk that groundwater may be being contaminated. The SPCG has, to date, not seen historical monitoring data or modelling which would support this concern - we would like to access and discuss this information with the relevant authorities. There are a number of monitoring bores in the township, and testing of private bores undertaken by SPCG in 2006 did not show any poor results.
6. The new AWT systems with subsurface irrigation land application are designed to prevent the treated effluent from entering the groundwater, as treated effluent is applied to the topsoil layer and taken up through evapotranspiration. Placing additional requirements (that are impossible to meet) on improved, newer systems, is not addressing the actual issue and will not lead to the desired outcome of protection of groundwater. Contamination, if it were to occur, would be more likely to be caused by unmaintained or failing older trench systems or damaged bores. It is noted that traditional systems of septic tanks and trenches, if properly maintained, have the ability to adequately treat and dispose of effluent, and have the advantage of being low maintenance, simple and robust. Advanced wastewater treatment units do not always perform well, particularly with variable flows in places with seasonal populations, and if not maintained to manufacturers specifications.
7. The relative impacts of domestic wastewater in relation to other land uses, such as agriculture, should be factored in when considering potential impacts on the aquifer.
8. Bore permits are given priority over the accommodation of waste water treatment plants (lack of coordination between bore and wastewater permits).
9. As the installation of a water bore for non-potable domestic or stock water use is "as of right" there is nothing to stop a land holder obtaining a bore permit to simply

prevent a neighbour from developing. Even if a building permit has been obtained, up until the time the onsite wastewater system is installed a neighbour can still obtain a permit for a bore and thus prevent installation.

10. It is clearly stated on signage around town, and on new bore permits, that ground water is unsuitable for human consumption unless suitably treated, therefore we believe that Council have satisfied their obligations of communicating this fact to the community. If Council were concerned that this was not the case, there could be enhanced communication on the issue.

3 Where to From Here? – Suggested Steps

Sandy Point has a unique and special natural environment, and the SPCG maintains that groundwater must be adequately protected for both public health and environmental reasons. However, we are not convinced that the current systems are posing an unacceptable risk to the groundwater. It is clear that the current setback requirement is not feasible for the current lot sizes, and that the guidelines need to be reviewed and a realistic and locally proven solution adopted. There are a range of possible options that could be explored, and we would like to see a commitment from decision makers to some kind of a resolution which is appropriate to the local conditions.

Table 4. Options for Sandy Point

Option	Comments	Assessment
0. Do nothing	Continue to impact upon landholders and ongoing uncertainty / costs Environment and public health still not protected because of the difficulty of replacing ageing septic tanks with modern AWT systems.	Not an option
1. Decommission all bores	In conflict with the “as of right” principles of the Water Act. Would create severe difficulties for households who depend on bore water for toilet flushing and garden watering during the summer months. Financial impact on people without funds to purchase trucked water to supplement tank supply. May still impact on environment	Not an option
2. Install centralised reticulation system (sewering)	High cost Generally not supported by community. Likely to be issues in getting the required percentage of the population to agree.	Not preferred
3. Look at reduced setbacks and/or systems with reduced land application area	Scientifically-based methods to look at suitable options (types of systems and land application options) for local conditions, and determine the appropriate setback/s and confirm whether a reduced setback distance is appropriate and safe. This would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigations (modelling) on local conditions to determine range of appropriate setback distances (evidence-based rather than nominal figure) 	Preferred option

Option	Comments	Assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider alternative systems that increase distance of effluent application to groundwater (mounds), increase evapotranspiration (wick trenches, ETA systems, reed beds) and otherwise reduce land application area required • Investigate options for reduced flows (greywater treated and recycled in-house; composting toilets) to reduce land application areas / setback distances 	

Of the options given in Table 4, it is clear to the SPCG that Option 3 is the preferred option.

In the first instance, we propose that the physical conditions in Sandy Point be investigated in more detail (local soil conditions, distance to water table, groundwater flows), and that location-specific calculations and modelling are done (e.g. water and nutrient balances, and bacterial/virus modelling) to determine the actual scenario, identify the distance over which bacteria and any other water quality parameters of concern are treated and reduced in the local sandy soils. While sandy soils are of higher permeability than other soil types, the distance over which it is safe to locate a bore from a land application area may still be well below the nominal 20m setback distance. From this investigation, a range of appropriate setbacks could be considered and the appropriateness or otherwise of the setback distances for the Sandy Point conditions could be confirmed. This need not necessarily be a large undertaking. If SPCG or the EPA has already undertaken such modelling, the SPCG request the opportunity to have access to and discuss the results.

We would also like to see clarity on the current water quality situation – in particular to better understand:

- What is known about the performance of the existing installed systems from monitoring?
- What is the level of risk and how has it been assessed?

The current situation should be established and we should have evidence about the extent to which the current system is working, or not working, before taking further action. The SPCG understand that the Council and EPA maintain concerns that the groundwater is being affected but we would like to see the evidence and data supporting this claim. This would include any risk assessments or Land Capability Assessments that might have been undertaken. If more data is needed, this could be an opportunity for a community monitoring program with potential for local involvement.

There is a great opportunity here to consider a range of possible options beyond the standard prescribed system for reducing land application areas and / or setbacks through using modified on-site management (composting toilets, greywater recycling, modified vegetated systems to enhance evapotranspiration, sand filters or raised mounds, etc.).

The SPCG suggest that a meeting (which we are happy to host) with all the stakeholders to discuss these options together would encourage transparent communication and collaboration about this issue. We would also support a risk assessment approach involving the community, to look collaboratively at the actual situation and the relative risks.

In the meantime, there are some other actions that which we suggest be taken concurrently

to help manage ongoing issues:

- The location of bores should be coordinated with Council to ensure they are located in the place of least inconvenience. Whilst we understand that installation of a bore is “as of right”, an agreement could be put in place between SRW and the EPA around working together on bore locations and wastewater systems to encourage careful thought about bore locations. A requirement could be put in place to ensure a bore be not allowed if hampering a neighbouring property, as the current situation where a bore can prevent building or renovation is extremely unworkable.
- If Council and Southern Rural Water had an agreement to work together and bore permits were issued on the basis of the bore having to be drilled in a spot to cause the least inconvenience that would negate some current problems, however it is noted that virtually all of the current issues relate to the location of old bores, not new ones.
- Consideration of a solution that allows failing septic tanks to be improved / replaced / upgraded rather than preventing them from being improved. Septic tank maintenance is an issue that should continue to be addressed.
- Public health warnings – continue to communicate that the groundwater is non-potable unless suitably treated. It is clearly stated on bore permits that “Water used under this licence is not fit for any use that may involve human consumption, directly or indirectly, without first being properly treated”.

4 Conclusions

As this paper attempts to highlight, the current situation is unworkable and continues to have a significant impact on the Sandy Point community. We are committed to resolving this issue and we seek to work together with all parties to get a common understanding of the issue and reach a practical, sensible outcome based on local conditions.

In summary, we recommend the following steps be taken:

1. Community engagement / meetings involving relevant stakeholders
2. Local condition- specific modelling / investigations to calculate appropriate setbacks
3. Review groundwater test results (and undertake more if required)
4. Consider alternative options for reducing setbacks and/or land application areas (modified systems, ET systems, greywater / blackwater recycling, composting toilets, etc)

We believe that any solutions should be sensible and practicable, evidence-based, cost effective and fair. They must ensure protection of public health and of the environment, and be appropriate for seasonal populations (consider maintenance requirements, complexity, costs, etc.)

We ask for a commitment from the EPA / SGSC to working with us to resolve this issue as soon as possible.

Appendix A – References

Environmental Protection Authority, Victoria, 2013. [Code of Practice on Waste Water Management](#)

Government of Western Australia Department of Health, 2001. [Code of Practice: Manufacture, Installation and Operation of Aerobic Treatment Units \(ATUs\)](#)

South Gippsland Shire Council, 2015(a). [Municipal Domestic Wastewater Management Plan 2016 – 2020](#) (draft / Version 2.2)

South Gippsland Shire Council, 2015(b). [Seasonal Population Issues Study](#) (Draft for public comment)

Appendix B – Case Studies

Business owner and builder (Andy Cumming)

Hi Ray,

As discussed, I am happy to be given the opportunity to vent my frustration, in regard to the South Gippsland Shire Health Dep't adopting an unrealistic, and in most cases unachievable, minimum distance from existing bores, and new proposed septic systems.

My name is Andrew Cumming, and as a Builder operating out of the Venus Bay area, I have built many houses and installed many septic tank systems.

A lot of years ago, after much water table testing, the local health authorities realised the need for a more sophisticated treatment system to reduce the possibility of water table contamination.

The introduction of the mechanical treatment systems proved to be the answer, treating sewerage to a very high standard, and with the use of sub-surface effluent irrigation fields which sit approx. 100-150mm under the surface, all treated effluent evaporates before it can soak into the sand and possibly reach a water table. This added a substantial cost to all houses, but it was accepted as a suitable solution.

Only recently, some bright spark in the health department has decided that this is not enough, and chose to adopt a recommendation from EPA, to introduce a minimum offset to all existing bores.

Point 1: This EPA study was carried out in an area where the foundation was clay based, and the borewater was the primary drinking water. (not relevant to this area).

Point 2: If the treatment plants and effluent fields are doing their job, what can possibly reach the water table, let alone a bore.

Point 3: Bore water is not allowed to be plumbed to any habitable area plumbing outlet, hence should not be able to be drunk.

I have a beautiful block of land at 732 Lees Road in Venus Bay, with fantastic views over the wetlands, boat ramp, Andersons inlet and islands. We have put this land up for sale, as we have moved to Sandy Point, purchased there, and need the sale to pay off debts. Within the last 6 months, we have had plenty of interest, with 3 unconditional offers, as long as Septic tank approval could be gained. My block is adjacent to a 5 acre property, with an illegally sited bore on the connecting fence line. As my block is 16.75m wide, and the offset distance from that bore is 20m. the required effluent field cannot be achieved. After discussions with the owner, he made it quite clear that he does not want a house built next door, obstructing his tranquillity, so he refuses to allow the bore to be moved. As the required effluent field for a reasonable house on my land cannot be achieved, this has made our property unsaleable. We have lost all three buyers, with one prospective buyer even having a meeting with the Health Department to come up with any possibilities, and after that meeting pulled out of the sale, stating it was unachievable.

I have tried discussions with the shire on this, and have been told to lobby the EPA about it. Am I naive in thinking that the shire are the people to change this ridiculous requirement, and as soon as possible.

I have also tried to get a rate reduction because of this and that also is unachievable at this time.

Hope this may help to find someone to listen, thanks, Andrew Cumming.

Landholder (Leigh Cadwood)

Hi Ray,

My name is Leigh Cawood - Andrea Adams from SEJ asked me to contact you re the bore issue at Sandy Point. We have met before, in fact you supplied the pump for the property at 25 The Boulevard.

To give you some brief background re my issues with the bores etc:

I inherited both 25 (with house) and 27(vacant land) The Boulevard in 2012. I put both properties up for sale. The house sold very quickly for the asking price of \$299,000. The block was advertised for \$249,000. There were some inquiries re the block, but it was during this period I was made aware of the issue with the bores and waste water and the sale did not go ahead.

This was a very frustrating time for me, because had I been aware of the issue during the advertised selling period of 25 The Boulevard, I could have decommissioned the bore prior to the sale.

I rang the Shire to get more details/advice but was given very little concrete information and was passed around from dept to dept with the vague message "its not our responsibility"(I have stayed in touch with Neil Shaw to try and keep up with what little progress there seems to have been on the issue through him.) The only suggestion was to contact the owners to try and negotiate.

I contacted the (new) owners of 25 the Boulevard, offered to pay to have a new bore located and to decommission the existing one. Of course they declined. Consequently, the block is practically worthless as it cannot be developed. The new owners are delighted to have the space and to ensure they cannot be "built in".

I am still paying very high rates \$1809.65 - (I intend to query this again with the Shire) on a block of land I do not want - and cannot sell. The proceeds of the sale are intended to be part of an inheritance settlement which now cannot be paid out.

Happy to provide more detail if you believe my case will assist your cause. I look forward to learning about any progress you may make with the issue.

Regards,

Leigh Cawood

0433 457 450
24 Almond Street
Balwyn North 3104

Local Property Owner

I own a block at 46 Ocean View Parade, Sandy Point. The block has been owned by me for approximately 40 years and was purchased with an investment in mind. The block was offered for sale around 2008. To encourage a buyer I committed to obtaining a planning permit, this turned out to be a lengthy process, but a planning permit was obtained in October of 2014.

Due to a bore located on an adjoining property the septic field has had to be located in the most desirable site for the house, resulting in the house location being forced to be in the least desirable part of the block, eliminating any chance of a view. The absolute insistence of the shire to the setback limits suggested by the EPA is unnecessary and is causing great hardship to some land owners in Sandy Point.

The CODE OF PRACTICE ONSITE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT in section 3.9 clearly states that councils may: "reduce the setback distances in non-potable water supply catchments where it considers that the risk to public health and the environment is negligible."

Ken Stranger, landowner, Sandy Point.

Real Estate Agent (Andrea Adams, SEJ)

Reply To:
Foster Office

17th November 2015

Sandy Point Community Group
Ray Henderson, Rick Martin, Caitlin Pilkington
C/- rickmar1950@hotmail.com

- Auctioneers
- Property Managers
- Livestock Agents



Dear Rick,

Re: Sandy Point revised EPA Wastewater Code of Practice

As you would be aware I have been employed by Ruralco SEJ for the past 12 years and I handle 95% of the properties for sale and sold within the Sandy Point township.

During this period there have been several significant changes introduced by the Shire of South Gippsland to the planning overlays in this coastal area. As we work at the coal face we attempt to keep up to date with these amendments to enable us to give accurate advice with regards to property values and associated issues when buying or selling in the area.

The current situation with the revised EPA Wastewater Code of Practice has caused the market to stall. Buyers are often aware there is a problem with building or renovating but they are not clear on the particulars. Owners have not been informed of the current situation and often we have to advise that they will struggle to sell their particular property due to the proximity of bores on neighbouring blocks. Clients who have bought and wish to extend are not able to do so. Others who have bought blocks have waited 12 months to get a planning permit based on the Council utilising an incorrect map showing bores in close proximity that did not exist. We have blocks for sale with planning permits that were issued pre this problem existing and now this causes confusion as the revised required set backs cannot be met. We have owners borrowing against blocks bought years ago that find the current sworn valuation \$60,000 under the price they paid for the property when they purchased. The valuers are concerned with requests from owners of vacant blocks asking for low valuations based on the fact that the land cannot be developed to enable them to obtain rate reductions.

Obviously this is a complex situation and it fully explains the reduction in the number of sales in Sandy Point (18 homes sold in 2015 including 2 blocks) (31 in 2010 including 10 blocks) whilst SEJ Ruralco has achieved the highest number of properties sold from the Foster office since 2010.

There urgently needs to be a directive from the Shire as to how this matter will be dealt with moving forward as the lack of information and guidelines is causing financial and mental hardship for many property owners in Sandy Point. We first notified all our vendors of this problem in February 2014 and seemingly nothing has progressed towards a resolution in the subsequent 20 month period, nor have the Shire been in contact with the rate payers during this time.

Please do not hesitate to contact me direct should you wish to discuss this further.

Yours faithfully,

Andrea Adams
Foster
Licensed Estate Agent
Leongatha South Gippsland Highway 8 Station Road
Leongatha 3959 Victoria
Sandy Point Branch Manager
phone: 03 5622 2801 phone: 03 5682 2800
fax: 03 5662 2353 fax: 03 5682 1016

Sandy Point
Beach Parade
Sandy Point 3959 Victoria
phone: 03 5684 1111

Warragul
Cnr Queen & Smith Streets
Warragul 3820 Victoria
phone: 03 5622 3800
fax: 03 5622 1244

www.sej.com.au
email: foster@sej.com.au
acn: 108 324 465
abn: 38 108 324 465
Officer in Effective Control and
Licensed Estate Agent
Russell Jones

Local people with national connections.