

1. Policy questions

1.1 Where does the 2019 Government Sewerage Policy apply?

The 2019 Government Sewerage Policy applies across Western Australia. It replaces the 1995 Metropolitan Government Sewerage Policy and two draft policies – the 2002 Country Sewerage policy and 2016 combined Government sewerage policy.

1.2 Will the policy be applied to planning proposals/applications that have been submitted and are currently being assessed?

The draft Government Sewerage policy (2016) has been considered relevant to planning decision-making since it was advertised for public comment. If an application has been lodged and not yet received approval, the existing policies and the new policy will be considered inclusively in decision-making.

1.3 Why does the Government Sewerage Policy require larger land application areas for on-site sewage disposal than the *Health (Treatment of Sewage and Disposal of Effluent and Liquid Waste) Regulations 1974*?

The policy requirements related to land application areas are based upon *Australian/New Zealand Standard 1547 On-site domestic wastewater management*. This represents best practice for on-site sewage and is used by the Department of Health to guide decisions related to on-site sewage disposal.

The Department of Health is undertaking major legislative reform as part of the rollout of the *Public Health Act 2016*, which will replace the *Health Act (Miscellaneous Provisions) 1911*. As part of this process, the *Health (Treatment of Sewage and Disposal of Effluent and Liquid Waste) Regulations 1974* will be replaced by new regulations that adopt *Australian/New Zealand Standard 1547 On-site domestic wastewater management*.

It is important to note that land application areas are not restricted to land containing leach drains. Land application areas may be incorporated into garden areas, provided that development and activities do not interfere with the function of the land application system or result in human contact with effluent residue. Further guidance on activities within land applications is available in Table 4 of the policy and the Department of Health website.

1.4 Why does the Government Sewerage Policy require more detailed site assessments and for on-site sewage than the *Health (Treatment of Sewage and Disposal of Effluent and Liquid Waste) Regulations 1974*?

The policy requirements related to site and soil evaluations areas are based upon *Australian/New Zealand Standard 1547 On-site domestic wastewater management*. This represents best practice for on-site sewage. This standard will be adopted by the Department of Health as part of its legislative reform that is underway for the *Public Health Act 2016*.

1.5 Can land application areas for onsite sewerage be located outside building envelopes?

Yes, provided that local government has issued its approval in accordance with discretion provided for under the local planning scheme or restrictive covenant. The location of the land application area should be informed by the site and soil evaluation.

1.6 The Government Sewerage Policy (section 5.1.1) requires connection to reticulated sewerage to be provided where deemed reasonable. Is there any guidance on what is considered reasonable?

Connection to reticulated sewerage is often required as a condition of planning approval. In order to be valid, all planning conditions must be reasonable, or not found to be unreasonable. It is not possible to provide specific criteria for identifying instances where a reticulated sewerage connection will be considered reasonable, as the determination of reasonableness is dependent upon a wide range of variables related to the scale and nature of the site, planning proposal and reticulated scheme. Further guidance on the test of reasonableness and the validity of planning conditions is available within the Model Conditions Schedule (WAPC, 2019), available online at www.dplh.wa.gov.au.

1.7 The Government Sewerage Policy states that on-site sewage systems should be located outside areas inundated during 10 per cent Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) rainfall events. Does this apply to both catchment flooding and inundation from rainfall?

Yes. Both catchment flooding and inundation from rainfall should be considered. This is because both will impact on the performance of the on-site sewage system.

1.8 The Government Sewerage Policy states that on-site sewage systems should be located more than 100 metres from a drainage system that discharges directly into a waterway or significant wetland without treatment. Will this be applied to urban development that has drains in road reserves?

Yes. Where treated effluent from on-site sewage disposal will flow through groundwater into drains (trapezoidal and sub-soil) that discharge directly into a waterway or significant wetland without treatment, each on-site system should be located more than 100 metres from the drain. Smaller setbacks may be considered on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation. Secondary treatment with nutrient removal may be required.

2 Process questions

2.1 Will my subdivision application need to be accompanied by a site and soil evaluation if on-site sewage disposal is proposed?

Yes, a site and soil evaluation will generally be required with the application and is reflected in Form 1A.

It will not be required for:

- subdivision where proposed lots are greater than 4 hectares
- minor boundary realignments or amalgamations that do not impact upon the capacity of proposed lots to accommodate on-site sewage disposal
- low risk proposals where the Western Australian Planning Commission's (WAPC), in consultation with the local government and relevant referral agencies, is satisfied that the minimum site requirements for on-site sewage (refer to section 5.2 of the policy) will be met.

In these instances, the applicant should provide a statement outlining how the minimum site requirements will be met. If further information is required, a site and soil evaluation may be required as a condition of subdivision.

2.2 I am proposing to do a subdivision with reticulated sewerage, but the Water Corporation has no plans to connect my area to the system. What do I do?

It may be possible for another sewerage service provider to service your area. Schedule 1: s. 3.3 of the policy sets out the information needed to be provided with your proposal.

If reticulated sewerage is required by the local planning scheme or WAPC policy, strategy or plan, and another service provider cannot service your subdivision, then the proposal may need to be delayed until one can be found.

2.3 Who can undertake a site and soil evaluation?

The Department of Health recommends that site and soil evaluation are to be conducted or overseen and signed off by qualified and experienced soil scientists.

The Australian Standard 1547:2012 states that site evaluators and soil assessors may include professional engineers, soil scientists, drainage contractors or plumbers with appropriate training, competence and experience in design and installation practice.

Western Australia does not currently have an accreditation process for site evaluators and soil assessors. As site evaluators and soil assessors are responsible for all work to evaluate the capacity of a site and its soil for accepting treated wastewater, they should, at a minimum be:

- familiar with any regulatory requirements; and
- able to certify that the evaluation procedure has been undertaken in accordance with AS1547:2012

2.4 Can local governments override the Form 1A requirement for a site and soil evaluation?

No, local governments do not have the power to override the requirements for a site and soil evaluation when on-site sewage disposal is proposed.

A site and soil evaluation demonstrates that a site is suitable for long-term on-site sewage disposal. It does not need to be a lengthy document but should be proportionate to the size and scale of the development proposed.

A site and soil evaluation lodged with the subdivision application ensures that the lot sizes proposed can accommodate the land application area needed. It also considers other constraints such as slope and soil structure which may impact on the size of the land application area.

2.5 Should planning applications incorporating on-site sewage disposal be referred within local government and to other authorities?

Yes. At a minimum, all applications incorporating on-site sewage should be referred to the environmental health officers within local government.

Where advice is required on compliance with *Australian/New Zealand Standard 1547 On-site domestic wastewater management*, or the adequacy of site and soil evaluations, applications should also be referred to the Department of Health.

Further information on referral to other external agencies is provided in section 6.1 of the policy.

2.6 Will the Department of Health provide assistance in assessing compliance of site and soil evaluations with Australian/New Zealand Standard 1547 On-site domestic wastewater management?

Yes. The Department of Health is the relevant referral agency. Additional advice on site and soil evaluations and training sessions is available on its website.

2.7 Are there any instances where a site and soil evaluation may be required as a condition of subdivision?

Yes, however only in extremely limited instances, such as where further information is required to determine the appropriate location for building envelopes. In these instances, the responsible authority in consultation with local government and relevant agencies must be satisfied that the minimum site requirements will be met prior to planning approval being issued.

3 Property questions

3.1 How do I know if I am in a sewage sensitive area?

The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage interactive map viewer PlanWA provides mapping for sewage sensitive areas across Western Australia.

- Launch PlanWA and select Theme and Government Sewerage Policy
- Enter the property address in the search bar
- Click on the property and relevant information will appear in a pop-up box
- Click through the pages in the pop-up box. If the Government Sewerage Policy is listed, the property is considered sewage sensitive.
- The sewage sensitive area will be displayed on the map viewer in green, yellow or blue and in some cases with cross hatching.

3.2 Part of my unsewered property is in a sewage sensitive area. What does this mean if I want to subdivide?

It depends on the location, lot size, zoning and R-coding. Section 5.2.1 of the policy provides more information.

- Example 1: Residential zoning R10 = 1 hectare lot size

A one hectare (10,000m²) unsewered lot in the Perth and Peel Region Scheme area where 400m² falls within a sewage sensitive area, with 9,600m² not considered sewage sensitive.

The lot will need to be subdivided with reticulated sewerage otherwise it would result in an unsewered lot size less than one hectare for the sewage sensitive portion (minimum lot size in sewage sensitive area is 1 hectare). If reticulated sewerage is provided, there is potential for the parent lot to be subdivided into 10 lots.

- Example 2: Residential zoning R20 = 2 hectare lot size

A two hectare (20,000m²) unsewered lot in the Perth and Peel Region Scheme area where 400m² falls into a sewage sensitive area, with 19,600m² not considered sewage sensitive. The lot could be subdivided into one lot of one hectare (which must contain the sewage sensitive portion) and four unsewered lots of 2,000m²+ for the remainder.

If the lot was outside the Perth and Peel Region Scheme area, nine unsewered lots could be created. If reticulated sewerage is provided, the parent lot could be subdivided into more than 40 lots.

3.3 Can the sewage sensitive map be changed in response to site specific investigations?

Mapping is indicative only. Where it is demonstrated that a site is located outside areas defined as sewerage sensitive, the policy provisions related to sewage sensitive areas do not apply.

3.4 Will the map be updated from time to time?

Yes. Mapping will be updated to reflect:

- additions to groundwater-dependent Threatened and Priority Ecological Communities
- re-classification of wetlands, and
- changes to proclaimed drinking water source areas.

It is therefore advised to always check the map for each proposal.

Where it is demonstrated that a site is located outside areas defined as sewerage sensitive, the policy provisions related to sewage sensitive areas do not apply.

3.5 When will secondary treatment system with nutrient removal be required?

Secondary treatment systems with nutrient removal will generally be required for on-site sewage disposal in public drinking water source areas and sewage sensitive areas.

The reasonableness of this requirement should be considered by decision makers prior to specifying system requirements via local planning scheme provisions and planning approval conditions. Secondary treatment systems with nutrient removal are more expensive than other systems and there is a very small number approved for use in Western Australia. Relevant considerations may include:

- the availability of installation, servicing and maintenance personnel for approved systems, particularly outside the metropolitan region.
- the nature of the proposal and the recommendations of the site and soil evaluation. For example, the systems approved for use may not be appropriate for the intended land use.
- the likely impact of on-site sewage disposal on the environment. When operating effectively, secondary treatment systems reduce nutrients and non-nutrient containments and pathogens from entering groundwater and ultimately sensitive water bodies.

3.6 My unsewered property is coded R10 and my lot size is 2,000m². Can I subdivide?

Subdivision to the R-coding in a local planning scheme is not automatic and depends on many factors, of which connection to reticulated sewerage is just one.

Many schemes assign R-codings on the basis that reticulated sewerage is to be provided to achieve that density. A check of the local planning scheme in your area is required as each situation is different.

A site and soil evaluation should be provided to demonstrate that the proposed lots can accommodate on-site sewerage in accordance with section 5.2 of the policy. It is noted that in soil category 6 (medium to heavy clay), larger lots will be required.

4 Development questions

4.1 If my property is not able to connect to an established reticulated system, what do I need to do to develop my property?

It may be possible for a new scheme to be established and for another sewerage service provider to service your area. Schedule 1: s. 3.3 of the policy sets out the information needed.

If reticulated sewerage is required by the local planning scheme or WAPC policy, strategy or plan, and another service provider cannot service your development, then it may need to be delayed until either the property can be connected to the established system or a new scheme is established.

4.2. Why are secondary treatment system with nutrient removal generally required in public drinking water source areas and sewage sensitive area?

When operating effectively, secondary treatment systems with nutrient removal greatly reduce non-nutrient, pathogen and nutrient concentrations, and thus reduce contamination of sensitive receiving water bodies.

Pathogens, nutrients and non-nutrient contaminants can cause significant issues for example, excessive nutrient can cause increased breeding of mosquitos and midges, algal

blooms and fish deaths. Removing nutrients and other contaminants helps keep waterways and waterbodies healthy.

4.3 How much land do I have to set aside for treatment and disposal?

The size of the land application area depends on a number of factors including the system used, soil type and slope. A guide is provided in AS 1547 and also in the Government Sewerage Policy Explanatory Notes.

4.4 Will a site and soil evaluation be required in support of all development applications that involve on-site sewage disposal?

A site and soil evaluation may not be required where the decision maker is satisfied that the minimum site requirements for on-site sewage disposal (refer to section 5.2 of the policy) will be met.

4.5 Can local government use the Government Sewerage Policy to assess development applications for a single house incorporating on-site sewage disposal?

The Government Sewerage Policy does not apply to development applications for a single house on a single lot. This is primarily because development approval is not generally required for this type of development and there is no mechanism to consistently apply the policy.

In instances where development approval is required, the consideration of on-site sewage may be considered relevant to a number of matters identified under clause 67 of the *Deemed provisions for local planning schemes*. In these circumstances, local government may use its discretion as to whether the policy is applied.

Sub-regional plans, district plans and local planning strategies

Broadly describe options for sewage management for proposed growth areas, considering:

- Identification of land where onsite sewage may not be appropriate, such as public drinking water source areas, sensitive receiving water bodies (including sewage sensitive areas) and areas with high groundwater
- Infrastructure limitations
- Opportunities for recycled and alternative water supply, particularly where limited water is available for public open space irrigation

Local planning scheme amendment or structure plan

Is connection to reticulated sewerage required? (Section 5.1.1)

1. In accordance with a planning document
2. Subdivision or development area already connected
3. Connection is considered reasonable
4. Absence of sewerage will jeopardise land uses already planned for
5. Absence of sewerage will prejudice ability to provide sewerage to local area
6. Absence of sewerage will pose unacceptable risk public health, environment or water resources
7. Land has high groundwater (<0.5m from natural ground surface) and lots less than 1 hectare are proposed

YES

Will lots be connected to an established reticulated sewerage scheme?

(i.e. existing sewerage service provider
[e.g. Water Corporation] infrastructure)

YES

NO

(Schedule 1: s.2.2)

Provide information required to demonstrate that connection will be provided.

Connection to a reticulated sewerage scheme operated by a licensed or exempted sewerage provider should be included in scheme amendment text.

Sewerage servicing requirements
considered acceptable

NO

lots >1ha

lots <1ha

Undertake assessment of best practicable servicing option for the land (Schedule 1: s.2.3)

Considerations include:

- Sewage treatment and disposal options
- Land use planning impacts
- Public health and environmental impacts
- Administrative impacts (scheme amendment text).

Demonstrate that the site will be capable of accommodating on-site sewerage (Schedule 1: s.2.4)

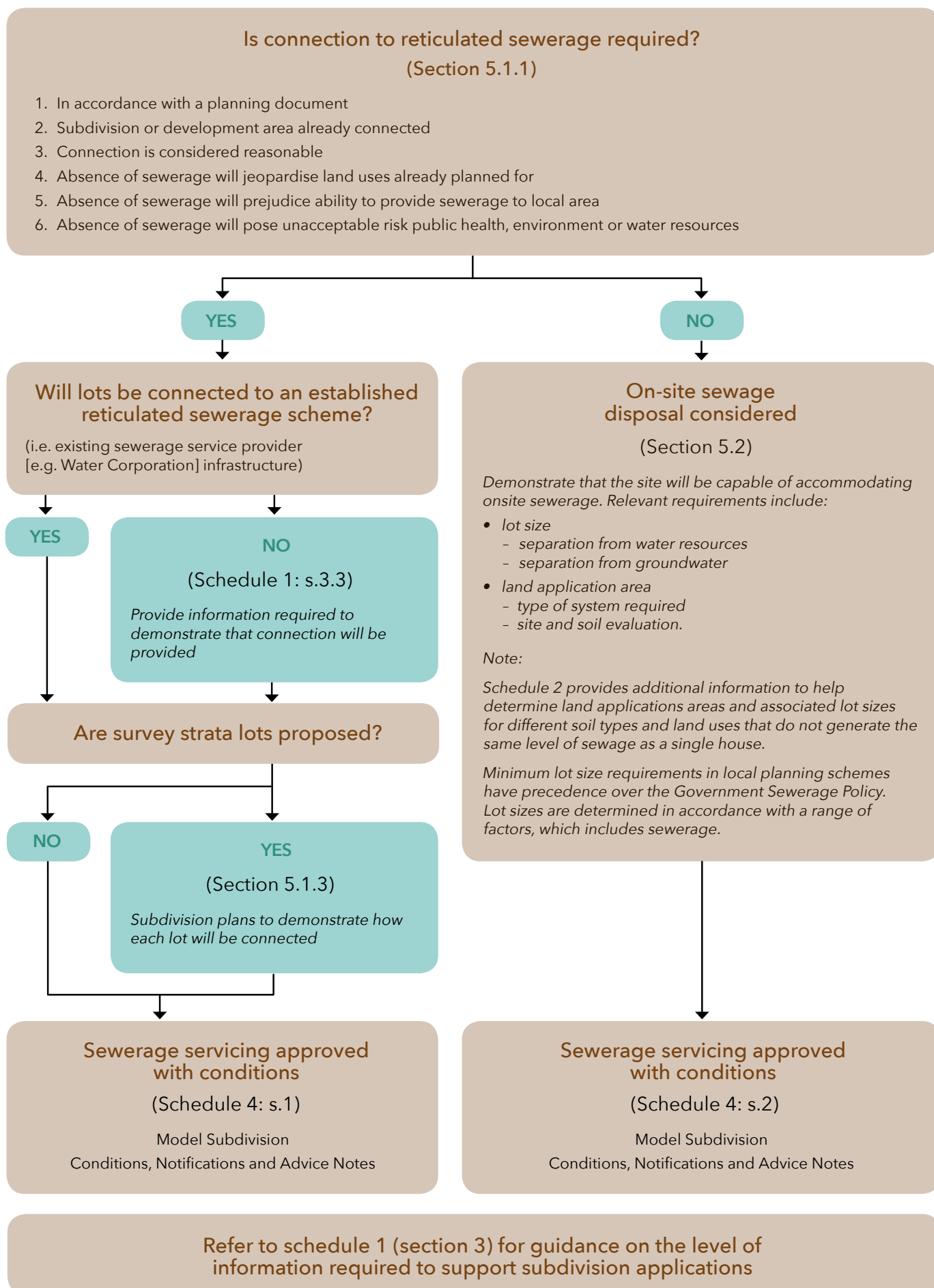
Requirements include:

- identification of water resources, including PDWSAs and SSAs, waterways, public and private drinking water bores, drainage systems, land subject to flooding
- site and soil evaluation
- capacity of site for land application area
- type of system required
- drainage management plan (if required).

Sewerage servicing requirements
considered acceptable

Refer to Schedule 1 (section 2) for guidance on the level of information required to support scheme amendments and local structure plans

Subdivision



Development application

Is connection to reticulated sewerage required? (Section 5.1.1)

1. In accordance with a planning document
2. Subdivision or development area already connected
3. Connection is considered reasonable
4. Absence of sewerage will jeopardise land uses already planned for
5. Absence of sewerage will prejudice ability to provide sewerage to local area
6. Absence of sewerage will pose unacceptable risk public health, environment or water resources

YES

NO

Demonstrate that the site will be capable of accommodating on-site sewage disposal

(Schedule 1: s.2.4)

Site plan showing:

- land affected by following water resources:
 - public drinking water source areas, wellhead and reservoir protection zones
 - sewage sensitive areas
 - setbacks from bores, waterways, significant wetlands, drainage systems and land subject to flooding
- feature of site including topography, soil type, depth to groundwater, vegetation
- existing and proposed building and paved areas
- on-site sewage system and setback
- land application area to which effluent is disposed and associated set-backs
- on-site stormwater management areas.

Site and soil evaluation consistent with ASNZS 1547 proposed sewerage servicing strategy:

- the type of quantities of sewage that will be generated
- type of on-site system proposed
- stormwater disposal where relevant
- servicing/maintenance requirements.

Sewerage servicing requirements
considered acceptable

Sewerage servicing requirements
considered acceptable

Refer to schedule 1 (section 4) for guidance on the level of
information required to support development applications

Survey strata subdivision

