

TOWARDS BETTER ONSITE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT IN VICTORIA - COMMUNITY EDUCATION SERIES

FACT SHEET 12: LAND OWNER – LAND CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT

This fact sheet may assist you if your local government has asked you to provide a Land Capability Assessment to support your proposal for a subdivision or installation of an onsite domestic wastewater management system.

12.1 WHAT IS IT?

Land Capability Assessments (LCA) are evaluations undertaken by a private consultant to determine the ability of your lot or subdivision to sustainably and safely dispose of wastewater. An LCA is specific to each application. It seeks to identify the constraints presented by each lot, and provide a management strategy to overcome any issues, if it is possible. LCAs are a means of supporting your application to local government to install or alter an onsite domestic wastewater system. If your lot is incapable of supporting wastewater disposal in a manner that is sustainable and safe, the LCA will state this. However, there is usually a viable solution to wastewater management for most properties and the land capability assessor should evaluate all wastewater options available to assist you.

12.2 AN LCA HAS ALREADY BEEN PRODUCED FOR MY BLOCK. DO I NEED A NEW ONE?

LCAs are documents written for a specific application at a particular time. Generally, LCAs will not be relevant to an application other than the one it was written to support. If you have had an LCA undertaken on your property, the current circumstances on your block may not remain the same and may not have been adequately assessed. Therefore, you may require a new LCA. Sometimes it is possible for your land capability assessor to amend or adjust an existing LCA. In order to determine what you will require, consult your local government Environmental Health Practitioner (EHP or EHO).

12.3 WHEN WILL I NEED A LAND CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT?

You may require an LCA when:

- Proposing a subdivision in an unsewered area;
- Applying to install an onsite domestic wastewater management system in an environmentally sensitive area;
- Applying to install an onsite domestic wastewater management system on a property with significant site constraints;
- Applying to install particular types of onsite domestic wastewater management systems where a Land Capability Assessment is a condition of the Certificate of Approval;
- Applying to install an onsite domestic wastewater management system for use with an unusual proposal.

Consult your local government Environmental Health Practitioner (EHP or EHO) to determine whether you will require a LCA for your proposal.

12.4 WHAT SHOULD A LAND CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT CONTAIN?

LCAs are specific to individual proposals and can vary in what they contain. Nonetheless, all LCAs must provide sufficient detail of all aspects of the risk assessment, along with a comprehensive rationale for all proposed management strategies. The following is a general guide of what you might expect to be included in a LCA.

- Executive Summary – provides a summary of the report with all key points listed;
- Introduction – an introduction to the report, describing the purpose and the subject;
- Background – an overview, any objectives, background and limitations of the report;
- Site Information – location, property title, lot size, planning zones and overlays, historical and proposed land use, features and use of surrounding land;
- Key Site Features – a detailed description and discussion of topography, soil types, climate, vegetation, drainage,

propensity of flooding, proximity to catchment areas, and all relevant site constraints;

- Infrastructure – all existing and proposed services and their locations. Services may include electricity, telephone, water, gas, sewerage, access;
- Property Use Features – livestock, horticultural activities, location and use of dams and bores, location of building envelope, water use, impacts of proposed development;
- Land Capability – land capability assessment matrix producing a risk rating, soil permeability rates and management protocols;
- Effluent Treatment and Design – recommended wastewater treatment standards, wastewater system design and specifications, all relevant sizing calculations, and location of effluent disposal areas and reserve areas;
- Management and Maintenance Protocols – ongoing management and maintenance requirements;
- Conclusion – a summary of key findings and recommendations of the report;
- About The Author – details of those involved in developing the LCA;
- Appendices – aerial photographs, site photographs, supporting documentation and references;
- Laboratory Data – soil classification data and all testing details;
- Maps – locality map, site maps of existing and proposed features, proposed subdivision layout, buildings envelopes, areas relevant to wastewater management.

12.5 WHO CAN DO IT?

There is no licencing scheme currently in place for land capability assessors, so be sure to do your research and seek some local advice. You might like to take a look in the telephone book at environmental consultants or surveyors, or alternatively ask your local government Environmental Health Practitioner (EHP or EHO). if a list of local consultants is available.

12.6 ANYTHING ELSE TO CONSIDER?

Land Capability Assessments often require the completion of soil tests, site assessments and consultations between the land owner and the assessor. The development of an LCA is a lengthy process and in some circumstances can take months to complete. If you have a strict timeline to maintain, be sure to keep this in mind.

12.8 WHO TO CONTACT:

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