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## ONSITE WASTEWATER HAZARDS INCREASED BY INCOMING STANDARD, SAYS INDUSTRY BODY

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The National On-Site Providers' Association (NOPA), representing on-site wastewater treatment providers, says a public health warning from a Queensland Government body only emphasizes the risks of implementing a new nationwide wastewater standard.

[In a statement](#) dated Aug 28, the Queensland Building and Construction Commission (QBCC) says that on-site wastewater systems (which includes domestic septic systems) are a danger to public health and safety due to a number of identified failures.

These problem areas, says NOPA, are almost exclusively noted in older style aerated treatment systems (AWTS) and not in newer, more sustainable passive systems.

Yet, the latter have been ignored in a new standard for the sector produced by Standards Australia – AS1546.3:2017 – with the likely outcome being this technology will cease to be available to householders.

Most states will introduce the new standard in January, 2021.

The three major risk areas identified by the QBCC are Hydraulic, Operational and Non-Compliance.

Ian Christesen, NOPA's Passive Systems Providers' Co-ordinator, says these deficiencies are almost exclusive to AWTS systems, and are rare in passive treatment systems.

AWTS systems use mechanical pumps, blowers and filters which are susceptible to breakdown and power cuts and require on-going maintenance. Passive systems use no mechanical parts, require no electricity, and do not require as much maintenance. Failure rates are well below those of AWTS systems.

AWTS generally disperse treated effluent above ground, adding to public health risks, while passive systems use underground dispersal methods.

NOPA has also highlighted that above ground wastewater dispersal systems have been called out in a recent [article in Nature](#), which noted “The formation of wastewater aerosols and droplets was confirmed as a key mechanism for faecal–droplet–respiration transmission during the SARS-CoV-1 outbreak, and is suspected in the current SARS-CoV-2 outbreak.”

Mr. Christesen says, “You have to now ask why would Standards Australia, and then state governments, all ignore clear public health concerns to fully back older, less appropriate systems and regulate out new technology which mitigates many of the identified health risks?”

“We are committed to making sure consumers get access to the safest, most cost-effective technology available for their wastewater systems and we believe the latest statement from the QBCC should get the attention of law-makers.

Clearly, the Queensland Government and other state governments need to take a long hard look at the QBCC statement and re-consider their position on this new standard which can now be said to be carrying a built-in public health risk.”

Further information please contact James Rose on 0427 419 415 or Ian Christesen on 0414 342 134

*NOPA is a not for profit Association established to provide the wastewater industry with an Association, a voice and a forum for the provision of high quality, cost effective on-site design, effluent treatment, installation and discharge to the environment.*

***Our children should always be able to play safely in our rivers, our streams and their own back yards.***