



Yarra Valley Water | *a fresh approach*

# *Using your pressure sewer system*

*An owner's manual*





## *Using this manual*

*This manual is a guide to the operation and maintenance of the pressure sewer system installed on your property. The system is easy to use and we strongly recommend that you take a few minutes to familiarise yourself with how it works.*

*There are some basic things that you should know about your pressure sewer system. These include:*

- how to care for your unit*
- what happens if the alarm sounds*
- what procedures need to be put in place before you go on holiday.*



## Contents

<b><i>What do I need to know about pressure sewer systems?</i></b>	<b>2</b>
Why install a pressure sewer system	2
What is a pressure sewer?	2
What components make up a pressure sewer system?	2
<b><i>How do pressure sewer systems work?</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b><i>Important information</i></b>	<b>4</b>
What items must NOT be flushed down your household drains?	4
Why can't rainwater go into the pressure sewer system?	4
Why must I keep heavy weights off the lid?	4
<b><i>What you need to know about alarms</i></b>	<b>5</b>
Why is my alarm going off?	5
<b><i>What happens if I want to extend my house or landscape the garden?</i></b>	<b>6</b>
House service line	6
Extensions to your house	6
Bungalows or other dwellings on your property	6
Landscaping	6
Garages, car parks, decking, and garden sheds	6
Installing a swimming pool or large spa	6
<b><i>What special precautions do I need to take when going on holidays?</i></b>	<b>7</b>
Going on holidays	7
<b><i>Pumping unit repairs and warranties</i></b>	<b>8</b>
What happens if my pumping unit needs to be repaired?	8
Pumping unit servicing	8
Pressure sewer bursts	8
Warranties and repair costs	8
<b><i>Conditions of connection</i></b>	<b>9</b>

## What do I need to know about pressure sewer systems?

### Why install a pressure sewer system?

Pressure sewer systems are an economical and environmentally-friendly way of collecting, transporting and disposing of wastewater from households. They are often used in areas when the landscape is either very hilly or very flat, in areas which regularly flood or have high water tables, or where it is impractical to install other types of sewerage systems.

### What is a pressure sewer system and how does it work?

A pressure sewer system is made up of a network of fully sealed pipes which are fed by pumping units located at each connected property.

The pumping unit processes the household wastewater and transfers it to the pressure sewer located in the street via a small pipeline within the property. The pressure sewer forms part of the overall pipe network which ultimately transfers the wastewater to

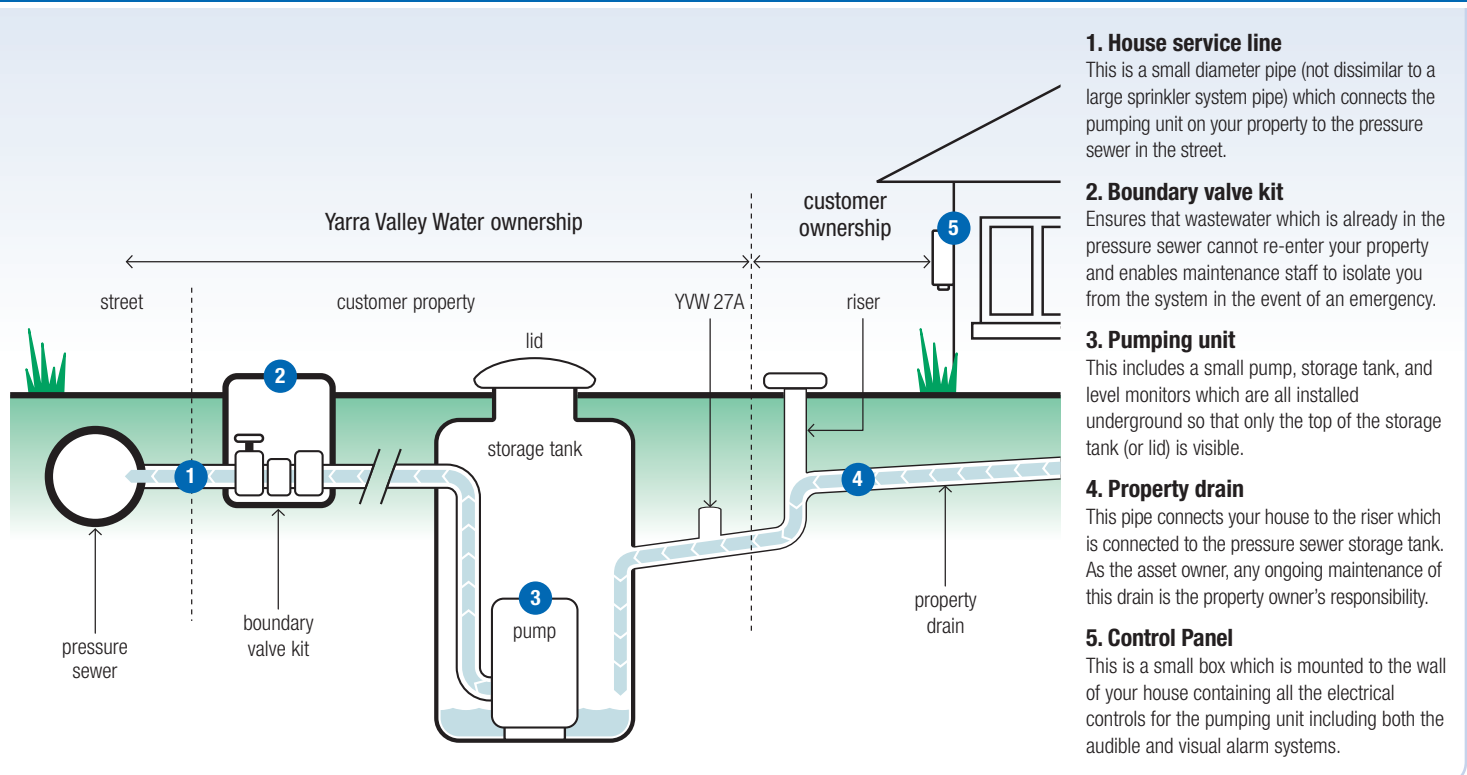
the nearest wastewater treatment facility – this could be within the surrounding area or many kilometres away.

Once installed, the only visible parts of the pressure sewer system are the tank lid and control panel.

### What components make up a pressure sewer system?

The pressure sewer system on your property is made up of five key elements, as shown in the diagram below.

#### Pressure sewer system components





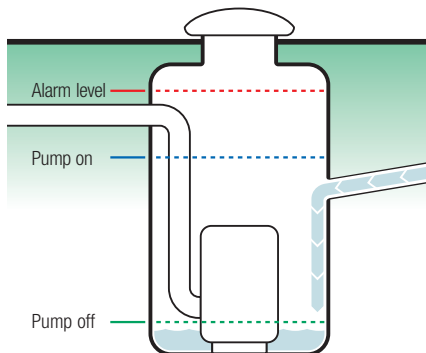
*Pressure sewer systems are an economical and environmentally-friendly way of collecting, transporting and disposing of wastewater from households.*

## How do pressure sewer systems work?

The main component of the pressure sewer system is the pumping unit which is installed on your property. The pumping unit works in the following way:

### STEP 1

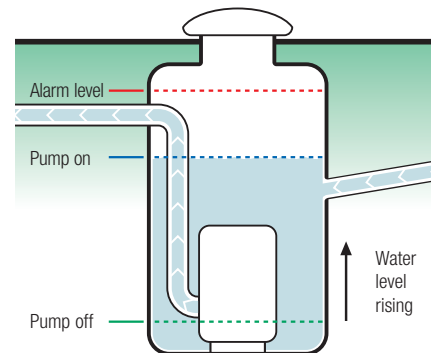
Wastewater enters the storage tank from the household drains (including sinks, toilets, showers, baths etc.)



PUMP OFF

### STEP 2

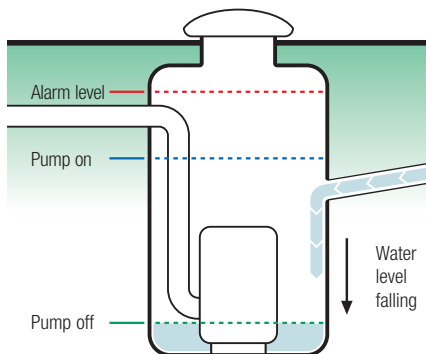
The wastewater level rises above the "pump on" level and the pump automatically turns on.



PUMP ON

### STEP 3

When the wastewater level is reduced below the "pump off" level, the pump automatically turns off.



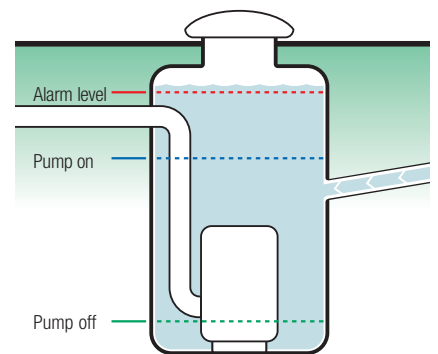
PUMP OFF

### STEP 4

In the event of a power outage or pump failure, the wastewater level may rise above the "alarm level".

The audible and visible alarm will automatically be activated.

See the section titled "What you need to know about alarms" for further instructions on what to do if the alarm is activated.



PUMP OFF

- ***The storage tank lid and boundary valve kit must not be covered by any landscaping works. You must also ensure that sufficient space is left around each of these components to enable access should it be required.***

## ***Important information***

### ***What items must NOT be flushed down your household drains?***

It is very important that the following items are NOT flushed down any of your household drains (sinks, toilets, showers, baths etc.) and into the sewerage system, whether conventional or pressure system:

- glass
- metal or metal filings
- seafood shells
- goldfish stones
- nappies, socks, rags or clothes
- plastic objects
- sanitary napkins or tampons
- kitty litter
- explosives
- flammable materials
- lubricating oil and/or grease
- strong chemicals
- gasoline
- diesoline
- rainwater

If the pumping unit fails due to any of the above items entering the storage tank, the customer may be responsible for meeting the cost of any repairs.

If you are unsure about what items can go into the pressure sewer system, please call Yarra Valley Water on 13 1721.

### ***Why can't rainwater go into the pressure sewer system?***

Pressure sewer systems are only designed to accept household wastewater, not stormwater or rainwater. Rainwater must not be directed into the sewerage system for the following reasons:

- it will increase the costs of pumping for you; and
- it can lead to alarms being activated; and
- in extreme situations, the pumping unit may overflow.

If the alarm regularly activates during or after rainfall, you should contact Yarra Valley Water.

### ***Why must I keep heavy weights off the lid?***

The lid of the storage tank is not strong enough to withstand the weight of very heavy objects (greater than 500 kilograms). As a guide, the following items should be kept off the lid.

- Cars and other vehicles
- Ride-on lawn mowers.



*To turn off the audible alarm, press the button on the underside of the control panel. The flashing light will only turn off if one of our representatives resets it, or the problem which has triggered the alarm is resolved.*

## What you need to know about alarms

### Why is my alarm going off?

There are a number of reasons why your alarm may be activated. The following table provides you with a step-by-step guide to dealing with an alarm activation.

Symptom	Action	How to do it
<b>Alarm sounds</b>	Turn off the audible alarm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>press the button on the underside of the control panel to disable the audible alarm</li> <li>the audible alarm will automatically shut off after about 10 minutes (regardless of whether the button on the underside of the control panel is pressed).</li> </ul>
<b>Flashing light</b>	Report alarm activation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the flashing light will only turn off if one of our representatives resets it, or the problem which has triggered the alarm is resolved.</li> </ul>
<b>Power outage</b>	Wait one hour before reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>if the alarm activates following a power outage, please wait for one hour before contacting us</li> <li>the alarm may sound when the power is restored as the wastewater level in the storage tank may have built up to above the alarm level</li> <li>once power is restored, the pump will recommence pumping but may take up to an hour for the wastewater level in the tank to drop below the alarm level (this is due to a number of other pumps trying to empty their tanks at the same time)</li> <li>you should attempt to minimise wastewater generation during power outages to minimise the amount that the wastewater level in the storage tank rises.</li> </ul>
<b>Power outage for longer than eight hours</b>	Minimise wastewater generation and advise us	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>take steps to minimise wastewater generation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>not turning on clothes washers while the alarm is active.</li> <li>keep showers brief</li> <li>where a bath was filled, leave the plug in until after the alarm is cancelled or bucket out the water onto the lawn</li> <li>switch off any drainage (automated or not) from swimming pools or spas until after the power is restored</li> </ul> </li> <li>advise us of extended power outages, particularly if it appears that the duration may exceed eight hours (excluding time when the residents are asleep)</li> <li>in the event of extended power outage events, we may need to organise for your storage tank to be pumped out.</li> </ul>
<b>If alarm sounds frequently and then turns off</b>	Investigate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>determine if there is any sudden discharge (such as from a swimming pool) and see whether the alarm is in response to this</li> <li>if the alarm sounds during or after rainfall, rainwater may be entering the storage tank</li> <li>should the problem continue to occur, please contact us to investigate and repair as appropriate.</li> </ul>
<b>If your neighbour's alarm sounds</b>	Contact us	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>if you suspect your neighbour is not home, please contact us to inspect the property</li> <li>the audible alarm will automatically shut off after a period of time.</li> </ul>
<b>Officer attends</b>	Create clear access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure our officer has access to and from the pumping unit as transportation of a faulty pump may be required.</li> </ul>



*Please call 13 2762 to report any alarms.*

## *What happens if I want to extend my house or landscape the garden?*

### ***Extensions to your house***

If you are extending your house, you must contact Yarra Valley Water to seek advice on the suitability of your existing pumping unit prior to the commencement of any construction activities.

Moving the pumping unit will be dependent on the layout of your land as all wastewater from your house must gravitate into it.

If we approve your application, the costs associated with moving the pumping unit and house service line will be your responsibility (a quotation will be provided to you prior to works being carried out). Any changes to the original installation need to be clearly documented and submitted to us to ensure that in the event of an emergency, our maintenance staff can locate the key system components.

### ***House service line***

The house service line is a polyethylene sewer pipe which connects the pumping unit on your property to the pressure sewer in the street. It is worth familiarising yourself with the exact location of the house service line so that it can be moved (if required) or avoided if work is being done on your property.

The house service line can be found using one of the following methods:

- detectable marker tape is buried just above the pipeline and can be located by your builder
- if your builder cannot detect the tape, contact us on 13 1721 and an officer will peg the line for you at a cost.

### ***Bungalows or other dwellings on your property***

It may be possible for your pumping unit to service both the main and additional dwellings on your property, depending on the layout of your land.

Please contact us for advice in relation to this matter.

### ***Landscaping***

Landscaping over the house service line is permitted, please bear in mind that if repairs are required, you will be responsible for the costs of any reinstatement works to repair any damage caused.

The storage tank lid and boundary valve kit must not be covered by any landscaping works. You must also ensure that sufficient

space is left around each of these components to enable our maintenance staff to access them if required.

### ***Garages, car parks, decking and garden sheds***

Garages, car parks, decking and garden sheds are not to be built over the pumping unit or boundary valve kit. Yarra Valley Water approval is required to build any of these structures over the house service line.

### ***Installing a swimming pool or large spa***

Installing a swimming pool or large spa can result in large amounts of water being discharged quickly to the pumping unit during activities such as backwashing filters or emptying.

In some cases, the pumping unit may not be able to cope with this and the alarm may activate or the pumping unit may even overflow.

Please contact us for advice in relation to this matter.



*If you are thinking about installing a swimming pool or spa, contact us and we will provide advice on how to avoid potential problems.*





*If you are extending your house, you must contact us to seek advice on the suitability of your existing pumping unit prior to any construction activities.*

## ***What special precautions do I need to take when going on holidays?***

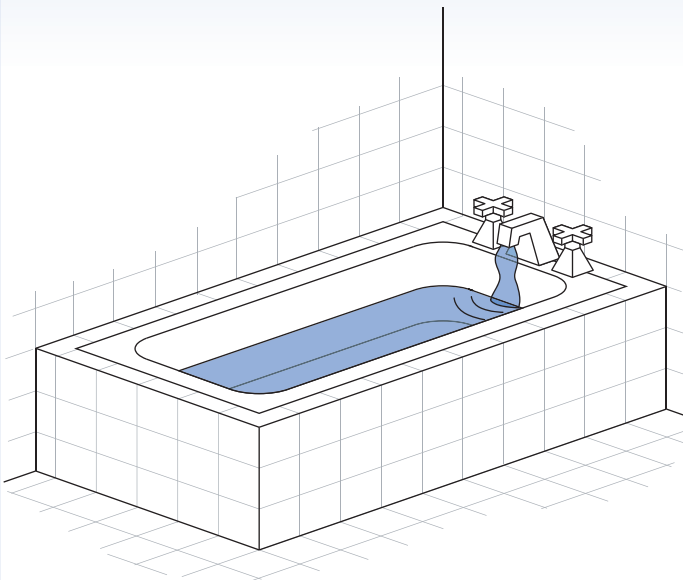
### ***Going on holidays***

If you are going on holidays for more than three days, your pumping unit will need to be flushed out to prevent potential odour problems.

It is suggested that you complete the following activities before going away:

#### **Flush the system**

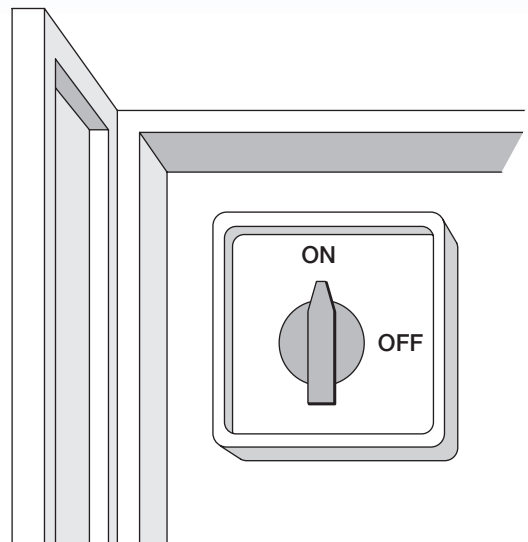
Run at least 190 litres of water into your household drains in order to activate the pressure sewer pump. This can be achieved by filling a bathtub and then emptying it, or doing a couple of loads of washing and using the shower just prior to going on holiday.



*Flush the system by filling the bathtub and then emptying it*

#### **Keep the power to the pumping unit turned on at all times**

If there are any leaking taps or appliances within your household, there may be a small accumulation of wastewater in the storage tank. If the pumping unit is turned off, it could potentially overflow and there would be no audible or visible alarm to warn you or your neighbours of the problem.



*Ensure the pumping unit is turned on at all times*

**!** *If you fail to clean your system before going on holidays and we have to flush out your storage tank in response to complaints from residents in the area, you may be required to pay for the costs of this work.*

## Pumping unit repairs and warranties

### What happens if my pumping unit needs to be repaired?

Pumping unit repairs are generally simple. In most cases, maintenance staff will be able to make immediate repairs to your pumping unit.

If the problem is more serious, your pumping unit may be replaced immediately and taken back to our workshop for repairs. Repairs and/or replacement of the pumping unit will normally be completed within an hour of our officer arriving at your property.

System part	Action	What will we do?
<b>Pumping unit</b>	Contact us	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• we will carry out repairs to all points of the pressure sewer system</li><li>• owners will not incur any cost for repairs which result from the normal operation of the system</li><li>• a replacement pump will be inserted into the storage tank if the existing pump requires significant repairs.</li></ul>
<b>Sewer or pump repairs</b>	Minimise wastewater production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• if repairs are required to the pressure sewer or the pumping unit, you should minimise wastewater production until repairs are completed.</li></ul>
<b>Boundary valve kit repairs</b>	Do not access them yourself. Contact us and wait for our officer to operate valves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• we will operate the valves in your boundary valve kit if required</li><li>• under no circumstances should owners open or tamper with the valves inside the boundary valve kit.</li></ul>

### Pumping unit servicing

The average pumping unit only requires servicing once every eight years.

Please report any pumping unit faults to us.

### Pressure sewer bursts

If you notice wet ground or water escaping from your plumbing, it is possible that a burst may have occurred.

Such breaks are rare and are more likely to occur due to other work being carried out near the pipes.

If you become aware of such a fault, please contact us (on 13 2762) immediately.

Following this, try to minimise water usage until the problem is fixed.

### Warranties and repair costs

#### Pumping unit warranty

Only our licensed representatives carry out repairs on the pumping unit.

Work by others that was not authorised by us in writing may void warranties and you may become liable for future costs.

### Replacement

If pumping units require replacement, you will not be required to meet any of these costs.

The only exceptions to this rule are if you have:

- emptied substances into the pumping unit which are banned as shown earlier
- accessed the pumping unit. The storage tank lid must remain sealed at all times and warranties are exempt if you open it
- interfered with the house service line or boundary valve kit
- blocked off the vents to the storage tank by covering it over.

## Conditions of connection to the sewerage system

1. Preliminary
  - 1.1 In these conditions:  
**you** and **your** refer to the owner of the property connected, or to be connected, to our pressure sewer system.  
**we, us** and **our** refer to Yarra Valley Water.
  - 1.2 Our Residential Customer Charter and our Business Customer Charter both incorporate these conditions. If there is any inconsistency between either of these documents, the conditions of connection contained within the pressure sewer home owner's manual (*Using your pressure sewer system – An owner's manual*) prevail.
2. Power  
We will arrange for the pump unit to be connected to the power supply on your property. If your electrical supply requires upgrading to comply with the current electrical standards, you will be liable for these costs.  
If your electrical supply meets the current standards but requires upgrading as a result of connecting the pump unit to it, we will pay for the cost of these works.  
In addition you will be required to pay for the power consumed by the pump unit.
3. Property drain  
You will be required to arrange the connection of your property drain to the capped inspection shaft (also referred to as the 27A) provided by us on the outlet of the pump unit which is your connection to the sewer system. You are liable for the cost of this work.
4. Installation  
We will install a boundary valve kit, along with the pump unit and connecting pipe work.  
In addition we will install the control panel and the associated electrical cabling to the pump unit and your electrical switchboard. We will pay for the cost of these works.
5. Maintenance
  - 5.1 You will be responsible for any costs associated with maintaining the property drain in good working order. Any work to be carried out on the property drain must be carried out by a licensed plumber.
  - 5.2 We will maintain the boundary valve kit, pump unit, connecting pipe work up to and including the capped inspection shaft (27A), the control panel, and the electrical cabling to the pump unit and your electrical switchboard.
  - 5.3 In an emergency (as indicated by the red flashing light on the control panel) or when you discover anything wrong with the pump unit (including a power failure), the control panel, electrical cables or connecting pipes excluding the property drain, you must notify Yarra Valley Water promptly on the Emergency and Faults telephone line (13 2762).
6. Damage
  - 6.1 If you, or someone else for whom we are not responsible, such as visitors, damages the boundary valve kit, pump unit, control panel, electrical cabling or connecting pipe work we will arrange for the repairs to be made. You will be required to reimburse Yarra Valley Water for the cost of any such repairs.
  - 6.2 If Yarra Valley Water, or someone for whom we are responsible, damages your land or anything on it while carrying out work referred to the above items, the legislation under which we operate requires us to either rectify the damage or compensate you for it.
7. Pools and spas
  - 7.1 If you have a pool or spa which discharges water at more than 0.5 litres per second when it is emptied or the filter is backwashed (this should be specified in your pool or spa user manual), you must limit the flow to the pump unit by installing either:
    - (a) an intermediate holding tank
    - (b) an additional pump; or
    - (c) a flow limiting valve.The installation must be done by a licensed plumber.
  - 7.2 You must meet the cost of purchasing, installing and maintaining the holding tank, flow limiting valve, or additional pump including any work (installation or maintenance) performed by a licensed plumber.
8. Restricting water use  
Whenever you discover anything wrong with the pump unit (including any power failure) or your property drain, you must restrict the amount of water which is discharged to your property drain as much as possible.  
This will reduce the amount of wastewater generated from your property while the fault persists, thereby helping to avoid any overflows from the pump unit.
9. Pressure sewer system manual
  - 9.1 You must ensure that a copy of *Using your pressure sewer system. An owner's manual* is kept at the property at all times, even if the property is leased or rented.
  - 9.2 You can obtain further copies of *Using your pressure sewer system. An owner's manual* from our website at [www.yvw.com.au](http://www.yvw.com.au) and click on Works in your area.
10. Decommissioning old systems  
When your house is connected to the pressure sewer system, you must arrange for a licensed plumber to decommission your existing wastewater treatment system (also commonly referred to as the septic tank), in accordance with EPA Victoria requirements. You must pay for this work.
11. Selling your property  
When we provide any information statements about your property (for example, to a potential purchaser) it will state that the property is in a pressure sewer area and that special conditions of connection apply to it.
12. Costs and charges
  - 12.1 If you are in a backlog area, you must pay the relevant backlog sewer contribution fee once a connection point to your property is provided. This contribution is payable in quarterly instalments over five years.
  - 12.2 If your property is in a backlog area and was provided with a sewerage connection point after 1 July 2008, you are eligible for a backlog sewer contribution fee rebate provided you connect within 12 months.
  - 12.3 If you are not in a backlog area, you must pay the full costs associated with supply and installation of the pumping unit as well as any required network extensions or augmentations.
  - 12.4 You must also meet the sewerage service and usage charges which apply to all residential or business properties.

## *Further information*

### **For more information contact Yarra Valley Water**

Telephone: **13 1721**

Emergencies and Faults: **13 2762**

Email: [backlog@yvw.com.au](mailto:backlog@yvw.com.au)

Web: [www.yvw.com.au](http://www.yvw.com.au)

Translator and Interpreter Service: **13 1450**



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### **General Enquiries:**

Web: [www.yvw.com.au](http://www.yvw.com.au) Email: [enquiry@yvw.com.au](mailto:enquiry@yvw.com.au)

General Enquiries Telephone: **13 1721** Emergencies and Faults: **13 2762** Translator and Interpreter Service: **13 1450**

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