Septic System Approval NSW: How to Get Council Approval (Without the Headache)

Septic system approval NSW explained simply: what council needs, why approval matters, the usual steps, and what to ask your builder to avoid delays.

March 4, 2026

Septic System Approval NSW: How to Get Council Approval

If you've been told you need septic system approval NSW, you're probably thinking: "Why? It's on my land."

That's a fair reaction. Most families never deal with septic approvals. So the process can feel confusing fast. However, council approval exists for a good reason. It protects your family, your neighbours, and the environment.

Australian family couples who are smart about their investment in their family home usually do one thing early. They get clear on the approval pathway before work starts.

What "septic system approval NSW" actually means

In NSW, councils generally want to confirm three simple things.

1) The system suits your block.
Soil, slope, drainage, groundwater, and space all matter.

2) The location is safe.
Setbacks are checked. That includes boundaries, buildings, driveways, dams, creeks, bores, and drainage lines.

3) It will work long-term.
Some systems need ongoing servicing. Council may require that plan up front

In many areas, this runs through **Section 68 (S68)** approvals. It can also link to a DA on some builds.

The usual steps to get approval

1) Get clear on what you're doing
Firstly, identify the scenario:

- replacement of an old system
- upgrade to a different system type
- brand-new system for a new build
- added load (extra bedrooms or a second dwelling)

Even "like-for-like" can still need approval. That's because disposal areas and setbacks still matter.

2) Confirm the pathway with council early
Next, do a quick check with council (or have your consultant do it). Ask:

- Do we need an S68 application?
- Is a DA also involved?
- Any local rules we should know about?

This small step can save weeks later.

3) Organise a site and soil assessment
Then, get the site assessed properly. This usually covers:

- soil type and absorption
- slope and drainage direction
- groundwater depth
- flood or overland flow risk
- available area for disposal or irrigation
- nearby dams, creeks, bores, and boundaries

This step stops you buying the wrong system.

4) Choose the system type that fits the land
Most options fall into two buckets:

- Septic + absorption trench/bed (often fine on suitable soils)
- Aerated treatment (AWTS) + irrigation (often used when soil or space is tighter)

Choose based on site conditions first. Price comes after that.

5) Prepare what council usually wants
After that, you'll normally need:

- a clear site plan (boundaries, buildings, slopes, waterways/bores, system location)
- system details (type/model, capacity, intended occupancy)
- disposal/irrigation design (size and layout)
- the site/soil report
- installer details (licensed)
- a servicing plan (common for AWTS)

6) Lodge the application and respond quickly
Council may request small changes. For example, they might ask you to shift the irrigation area. Reply quickly and it keeps moving.

7) Install to the approved plan
Once approved, install must match the plan. Inspections may also be required.

8) Understand ongoing obligations
Finally, some systems require servicing and record-keeping. Councils often take this seriously.

Where your builder should step in (and how to push back)

Here's a key point homeowners miss. If your builder is worth their salt, they help manage this. Or, at least, they make responsibilities crystal clear.

A good builder will usually:

- flag septic needs early
- coordinate the right consultant or supplier
- check the septic layout works with levels, access, and services
- allow time for approvals in the program
- keep things moving if council asks for changes

If it's unclear, ask these questions:

- Who is coordinating the septic approval — you, me, or a consultant?
- When is the site/soil assessment happening?
- Have you allowed time for approval in the build program?
- If council requests changes, who updates the plans?

You're not being difficult. You're protecting your timeline.

A typical example (what this looks like)

You're on acreage. The old system is failing. There are smells and soggy patches.

You assume it's a quick replacement. However, the site assessment shows poor-draining soil. There's also a dam nearby. Space is tighter than expected.

So, the design shifts to an AWTS with irrigation. The layout is drawn to meet setbacks. The application is lodged. Council asks for a small change. Then it's approved and installed.

The goal stays simple: **the right system, in the right place, for your block.**

Quick checklist (to avoid delays)

Before you commit, check you can answer:

- Do we need septic system approval NSW via S68, and/or a DA?
- Has a site/soil assessment been done?
- Do we have enough land area for disposal or irrigation?
- Are setbacks workable and clearly shown?
- Is the system type suitable and accepted by council?
- If it needs servicing, do we understand that ongoing requirement?

Australian family couples who are smart about their investment in their family home don't leave this vague. They get clarity early. That's how you avoid delays and rework.

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