

1. Purpose

The Environment Protection (Scheduled Premises) Regulations 2017 (which came into operation on 25 June 2017) state (in Schedule 1, scheduled category A03, column 3) that sewage treatment plants ‘...occupied by a water corporation are exempt from works approval under section 19A of the *Environment Protection Act 1970* (Vic) in relation to modification works in accordance with specifications acceptable to the Authority’.

This guideline specifies the types of modification works that EPA regards as acceptable for this exemption from an EPA works approval requirement.

2. Legal status

Water corporations undertaking modification works at a sewage treatment plant that they occupy¹ and that is a ‘scheduled premises’ under the Environment Protection (Scheduled Premises) Regulations 2017 do not require an EPA works approval if the modification works are one of the types listed in the current version of this Guideline.

The *Environment Protection Act 1970* (Vic) includes significant penalties for undertaking works without an EPA works approval where it was required.

Please contact EPA’s Development Assessments Unit via 1300 372 842 (1300 EPA VIC) if:

- you are unclear if the type of modification that you are proposing is eligible for this exemption from an EPA works approval
- your proposed works require EPA to assess and approve an amended reuse environment improvement plan (EIP) (modification types 1(b), 2(b) and 5 below).

3. Types of modifications exempt from an EPA works approval requirement

The following types of modifications to sewage treatment plants occupied by a water corporation are exempt from an EPA works approval requirement.

1. Works to provide for more capacity for an aerobic bioreactor, subject to –
 - a) in the case of a sewage treatment plant that is licensed for discharges to surface water, the works will not result in existing licensed discharge limits being exceeded
 - b) in the case of a sewage treatment plant that discharges waste solely to land and is exempt from licensing but is subject to an environment improvement plan (EIP):
 - i. prior to commencing the works, the water corporation must notify EPA about the proposed works and advise EPA as to whether their EIP will require amendment because of the works
 - ii. if the EIP requires amendment because of the modification works, the water corporation must obtain the relevant approvals and endorsements of the amended EIP² prior to increasing the supply of reclaimed water.
2. Works to provide for more capacity for an anaerobic digester system, subject to –
 - a) in the case of a sewage treatment plant that is licensed for discharges to surface water, the works will not result in existing licensed discharge limits being exceeded
 - b) in the case of a sewage treatment plant that discharges waste solely to land and is exempt from licensing but is subject to an EIP:
 - i. prior to commencing the works, the water corporation must notify EPA about the proposed works and advise EPA as to whether their EIP will require amendment because of the works

¹ ‘Occupier’ is defined in the *Environment Protection Act 1970* (Vic), s.4.

² The approvals and endorsements required for EIPs differ according to the circumstances. Refer to the *Guidelines for Environmental Management – Use of Reclaimed Water* (EPA publication 464.2, November 2003), p.8 (as amended).

Modifications to water corporation sewage treatment plants exempt from works approvals

- ii. if the EIP requires amendment because of the modification works, the water corporation must obtain the relevant approvals and endorsements of the amended EIP prior to increasing the supply of reclaimed water.
3. Works, including covering an anaerobic lagoon, to collect biogas for power generation and/or flaring.
4. Works to provide for increased storage capacity for emergency storage lagoons for untreated sewage during wet weather events.
5. Works to treat class C or B effluent to class A or fit-for-purpose quality, subject to a Health and Environment Management Plan (HEMP)³ and/or an EIP for the class A reuse scheme being completed by the water corporation and approved by EPA prior to the water corporation supplying the treated water.
6. Works to provide for increased nutrient removal within an existing treatment system (for example, by installing baffles in lagoons, adding extra aeration for nitrification, changing aeration sequence to create aerobic and anoxic zones, chemical dosing for phosphorous removal).

Prior to undertaking any of the above types of modification works, a water corporation must ensure that, if the sewage treatment plant is licensed by EPA, all of the conditions of that licence will continue to be met.

³ The objectives of a Health and Environment Management Plan (HEMP) are outlined in the *Guidelines for Environmental Management – Dual Pipe Water Recycling Schemes* (EPA publication 1015, October 2005), section 2.4 (as amended).