Mount Buffalo chalet wastewater upgrades

Opportunity to provide feedback



August 2026

Parks Victoria is seeking feedback on our proposal to upgrade the Mount Buffalo Chalet's wastewater system.

This update provides information on the history of the wastewater system, why it needs to be upgraded, assessments and what is being considered.

Background

The Victorian Government is continuing to invest in improving infrastructure in Mount Buffalo National Park and the surrounding area. This will provide a year-round key tourism attraction for north eastern Victoria.

Parks Victoria is working with the Belgravia Group to reactivate Mount Buffalo Chalet in stages. Belgravia has a 40-year lease to run programs and services from the Chalet, starting in February 2025. This includes school outdoor education camps, a café and, in the future, a heritage hotel.

School outdoor education camps began again in February 2025 and interest from school groups continues to grow.

The Chalet's old wastewater system needs to be upgraded so visitors can enjoy showers and flushing toilets.

Wastewater is generated from toilets, showers, sinks and kitchens that needs to be treated before it can safely be released into the environment.

The upgrades must meet today's Environment Protection Authority (EPA) requirements.

We expect the new wastewater system and other upgrades to be complete by 2029.

History of the wastewater system

Mount Buffalo Chalet is the largest timber building in Australia and is on both the Victorian Heritage Register and the National Heritage List.

Before the Chalet closed in 2007, wastewater was treated by an old treatment plant. It was originally designed in 1951 and could treat up to 100 kilolitres of wastewater each day.

The treated water was released into an unnamed tributary of Eurobin Creek, just below the chalet. This is part of the Ovens River Special Water Supply Catchment.

The Chalet closed in 2007, but the wastewater treatment plant was still used until 2009 when it was shut down. Parks Victoria gave up its EPA licence for releasing treated wastewater around 2017. The old wastewater infrastructure is still there.

Currently the small amount of wastewater created is regularly pumped out of holding tanks and trucked down



The old wastewater system

the mountain. However, as use of the Chalet increases this is not a safe or viable long-term solution.

Upgrading the wastewater system

We are working with consultants to determine the best way to safely manage wastewater from the Chalet in future.

We have engaged Pitt & Sherry Environmental Engineers to re-design the wastewater system and bring it up to a standard that meets EPA Victoria Wastewater Guidelines.

We are still working out what the new wastewater treatment and disposal systems will be.

Wastewater will be collected and treated in a modern treatment plant. The high-quality treated wastewater will then be released through a regulated disposal system and will flow into Eurobin Creek.

We're working with park neighbours and key stakeholders to understand how people use water from Eurobin Creek. This will help us decide how we need to treat it, so it is safe for humans, animals and the environment.

This is part of a bigger risk assessment that the EPA needs before it can approve our wastewater plan.

What has been done so far

Pitt & Sherry and a previous environmental engineering firm RMCG have assessed the site. They looked at its environmental values, limits and risks. Pitt & Sherry is also doing an environmental and human health risk assessment.

This work will help guide the design of a new system and understand how it could affect the park ecosystem and people who use water downstream.

The main challenges include:

- The site is in a near-pristine national park
- Demand is highest in summer
- The site relies on off-grid power, such as solar panels, batteries and backup generators
- The climate is wet and cold
- There is limited land for irrigation
- The site is remote and alpine
- The soil is shallow and rocky
- The land has steep slopes
- The road from the chalet to Porepunkah is narrow and can be icy



The old wastewater system

Several wastewater options are not possible because of the land, weather, and location. These include:

- Evaporation basins: there is not enough suitable land, and it is too rocky.
- Discharge to groundwater: there is hard bedrock and a complex groundwater system. The groundwater may be limited and very deep. It would not be practical to build a bore here.
- Snowmaking: due to Mt Buffalo's low elevation the park is not high enough or cold enough to use the treated water to make snow all year round.
- Trucking wastewater off site for treatment: this is not viable when more wastewater is being created.
- Treating wastewater onsite and using it to water gardens is a limited option. The chalet gardens and grassed areas are too small. Health rules also limit where treated water can be used near accommodation and busy areas.

Managing wastewater risk

Pitt & Sherry are looking at the risks of a new wastewater system. This includes checking:

- That the plant meets all EPA rules.
- How treated wastewater may be used for recreation.
- Possible impacts on waterways, plants, animals and other species that depend on water.
- Risks if livestock or people living downstream encounter, or drink, treated wastewater.
- Water quality testing and water flow checks.
- Whether any protected plants or animals listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act or Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act are present.
- Which aquatic water bugs and aquatic biota and other creek life live in Eurobin Creek.

Proposed treatment system

The new system must:

- Be easy to operate with limited direct intervention
- Be suitable for cold climate
- Use as little electricity as possible
- Be capable of operating at fluctuating seasonal flow, as flow levels will vary depending on the number of visitors
- Be able to cope with a calculated peak daily flow of 45 kilolitres a day. This flow considers the way water will be used in the Chalet (for example, the proportion of water expected from toilets, showers, kitchens)

Next steps

Parks Victoria and Pitt & Sherry are discussing the wastewater system with downstream neighbours, Department of Health, North East Water, North East Catchment Management Authority, Taungurung Land & Waters Council, Agriculture Victoria, Alpine Shire and EPA Victoria.

After all our assessments are complete, Pitt & Sherry will submit a wastewater discharge license application to EPA Victoria.

EPA will advertise the proposal and there will be a 3-week period where people can lodge comments or objections.

After that, the EPA will manage and resolve any feedback and evaluate the application.

This process with the EPA usually takes about six months.

You can find out more about wastewater management on the EPA's website at https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/wastewater

How to provide feedback

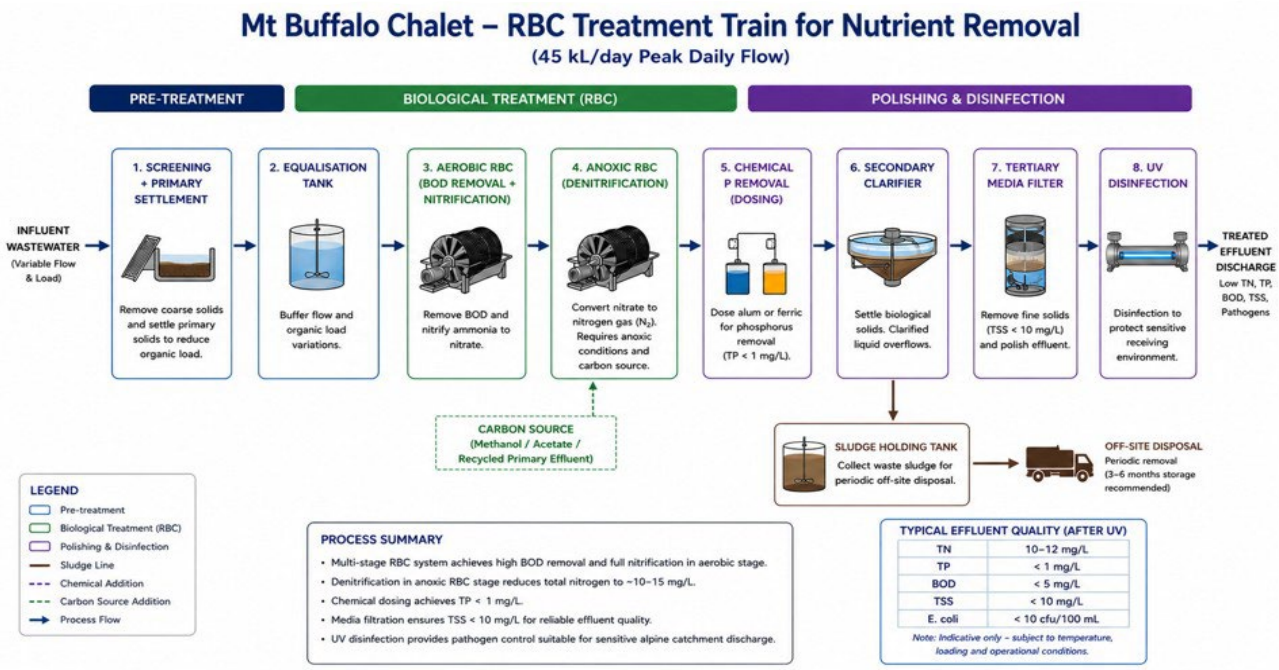
You will have the opportunity to provide formal feedback through the EPA process. However, we are also keen for any feedback or questions you may have at this point before we lodge the application with the EPA.

Please email andrew.mcdougall@parks.vic.gov.au with any feedback or questions. We will review this and seek advice on any technical question matters.

We will keep neighbours, community and park visitors updated as work progresses.

Technical information

For those wanting more detail, the diagram below shows technical information on the way the new Rotating Biological Contactor (RBC) system is likely to work.



This diagram shows how the proposed wastewater system is likely to work

The below map shows where the treated wastewater is proposed to flow from the new system into an unnamed creek that flows into Eurobin Creek. This is the same path it used to flow from the old system.

The distance from the treatment plant to various parts of the water system are:

- To Eurobin Creek - 570 metres.
- To Eurobin Falls – approximately 2.3 kilometres
- To Ovens River – approximately 8 kilometres



The blue line indicates where the treated wastewater is proposed to flow