

GUIDELINES FOR DECOMMISSIONING, REUSE, REMOVAL AND RELOCATION OF SEPTIC TANKS, COLLECTION WELLS, AND AERATED WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS (AWTS)

These guidelines have been developed from the recommendations of the NSW Department of Health. The guidelines provide information on the decommissioning and reuse of septic tanks, collection wells and aerated wastewater treatment systems (AWTS), and are intended primarily for those premises that will be connecting to the Murrumbateman Sewerage Scheme.

THE **REUSE** OF SEPTIC TANKS, COLLECTION WELLS AND AWTS CAN ONLY BE FOR THE STORAGE OF WATER THAT IS TO BE USED FOR THE WATERING OF GARDENS AND LAWNS. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES ARE THEY TO BE REUSED AS VESSELS FOR HOLDING WATER FOR DOMESTIC (WASHING & DRINKING) PURPOSES.

Where it is possible to reuse a septic tank, several precautions need to be observed to ensure there is no danger to public health or the environment. The reuse or removal of a septic tank, collection well or AWTS shall only be carried out if another approved method of effluent disposal is available, such as the sewer being connected to the premises concerned.

A *Section 68 Approval to carry out works* will be required to convert an existing septic tank, collection well or AWTS for the collection and reuse of roof water. See Form No.14 - [Application for Section 68 \(Approval to Carry out an Activity\)](#) on Council's website www.yassvalley.nsw.gov.au

To ensure that the existing septic tank, collection well or AWTS does not pose a risk to public health or the environment, one of the following methods should be followed.

1. DECOMMISSIONING OF SEPTIC TANKS AND COLLECTION WELLS – TANKS AND WELLS REMAINING ON SITE & NOT TO BE REUSED

- 1.1. The contents of the septic tank/collection well are to be removed by pump out tanker.
- 1.2. The sides, lid, baffle (if fitted) and square junctions of the tank should be hosed down as the tanker is removing the contents.
- 1.3. The tank is to be disinfected by spreading hydrated lime over all exposed surfaces. *NOTE: under no circumstances should people climb into and access the tank for this purpose.*
- 1.4. Several holes should be punched into the bottom of the tank. The lid and those parts of the walls above the ground should be demolished and collapsed into the tank and the tank filled with clean soil.

2. AWTS: REMAINING ON SITE AND NOT TO BE REUSED

- 2.1 The contents of the AWTS are to be removed by pump out tanker. The liquid contents of the AWTS are not to be irrigated using the land application system.
- 2.2 The sides, lid, baffles, components and square junctions of the AWTS should be hosed down as the tanker is removing the contents.
- 2.3 The pumps, blowers and internal components of the AWTS may be either collapsed into the AWTS or selectively removed by the owner/occupier, and AWTS manufacturer or service agent for use only as spare parts. The owner/occupier, manufacturer or service agent must remove such parts in a manner that will not contaminate the environment or compromise the occupational health and safety of themselves or others.
- 2.4 The AWTS and remaining components are to be disinfected by spreading hydrated lime over all exposed surfaces. *NOTE: under no circumstances should people climb into and access the tank for this purpose.*

- 2.5 Several holes should be punched into the bottom of the tank. The lid and those parts of the walls, baffle and square junctions above the ground should be demolished and collapsed into the tank and the tank filled with clean soil.
- 2.6 All irrigation lines and spray heads, sprinklers, drippers and the like are to be flushed with potable water for 5 minutes. Should the irrigation lines be connected to the reticulated water supply, the installation shall comply with Yass Valley Council's requirements ie. a backflow prevention device will be required to be installed by a licensed plumber.

3. SEPTIC TANK, COLLECTION WELL OR AWTS: REUSED ON SITE AS A ROOFWATER STORAGE TANK FOR WATERING THE GARDEN (IRRIGATION) OR FIRE FIGHTING

- 3.1 The reuse of septic tanks shall only be carried out where the tank and lid are structurally sound. Tanks that are damaged and are not structurally sound should be decommissioned according to Section 1 of these guidelines.
- 3.2 For reuse on site as an irrigation tank, the contents of the tank are to be removed by pump out tanker.
- 3.3 The sides, lid, baffle (if fitted) and square junctions of the tank should be hosed down as the tanker is removing the contents.
- 3.4 The tank is to be mosquito proofed.
- 3.5 The tank should be filled with clean water and disinfected to a minimum level of 5mg/L of free residual chlorine with a half hour contact time. The chlorine should be allowed to dissipate naturally and not be neutralised. *NOTE: After chlorination no reuse should take place for a minimum of seven (7) days as the water may affect plants and vegetation.*
- 3.6 The inlet (s) and outlet (s) may be sealed. Pumps and other accessories may then be installed and connected to an irrigation system.
- 3.7 The tank is to be labelled as containing water unfit for human consumption (eg. WARNING – WATER FOR IRRIGATION PURPOSES ONLY – NOT FOR DRINKING). The sign should have a yellow background with 20mm high black capital lettering together with the appropriate non-potable water symbol.
- 3.8 Non-standard water fittings or irrigation fittings are to be used and no cross connection is to be possible with any potable (drinking) supply.
- 3.9 Roof water pipes only are to be connected to the tanks.
- 3.10 An overflow pipe is to be installed to the tank. This should be connected to a drainage easement system, the street gutter or existing absorption trenches.
- 3.11 For the first two (2) months after conversion of the system, it is recommended that the free chlorine levels of the water be tested and maintained at a level above 1.5 and below 5mg/L.
- 3.12 Property owners should note that septic tanks may be prone to lifting out of the ground due to ground water pressure if they are left empty. To prevent this, residents should contact a plumber or tank manufacturer for further advice about the specific requirements applicable to their individual system.
- 3.13 If a pump is to be installed, a pump supplier should be consulted to ensure that it is designed to meet the required flow and hydraulic requirements specific to the site. This is critical if the pump is used to pump stormwater overflows to Council's street gutter especially during periods of wet weather.
- 3.14 All electrical work associated with the installation of pumps is only to be done by a licensed electrician, with a safety cut-off switch installed.
- 3.15 Fixed sub-surface irrigation systems are preferred to aboveground spray systems.
- 3.16 Where permanent taps are fitted, signs must be installed to advise that water is not suitable for drinking purposes (eg. WARNING – WATER FOR IRRIGATION PURPOSES ONLY – NOT FOR DRINKING). The sign should have a yellow background with 20mm high black capital lettering together with the appropriate non potable water symbol.
- 3.17 The roof water reuse system should not cause any drainage nuisance to adjoining properties or the nature strip.

4. SEPTIC TANKS AND COLLECTION WELLS: REMOVED AND RELOCATED

- 4.1 Septic tanks and collection wells may only be removed, relocated and reused as such where the septic tank or collection well is subject to a current certificate of accreditation issued by the NSW Department of Health.
- 4.2 The septic tank and/or collection well may be removed only if the structural integrity of the tank and/or collection well can be maintained. Only tanks certified as complying with AS1546 shall be reused as septic tanks.
- 4.3 Any new installation will require Council approval after assessing the suitability of the site and the proposed use for the tank.
- 4.4 The contents of the septic tank and/or collection well are to be removed by pump out tanker.
- 4.5 The sides, lid, baffle (if fitted) and square junctions of the tank should be hosed down as the tanker is removing the contents.
- 4.6 The inlets and outlets should be plugged and the tank should be filled with clean water and disinfected to a minimum level of 5mg/L of free residual chlorine, with a half hour contact time. The lid should be exposed to the chlorine solution. The chlorine should be allowed to dissipate naturally and not be neutralised.
- 4.7 The contents may then be removed by pump out tanker.
- 4.8 Approval from Council is to be obtained before the tank and/or well is reinstalled as a septic tank or collection well within the Yass Valley Council area.
- 4.9 If the tank is to be removed, relocated and reused as a roof water irrigation tank, the tank is still to be emptied, cleaned and disinfected as outlined above.
- 4.10 Council's conditions of approval for a new installation apply. Ie. Submit a Section 68 Application.

5. AWTS: REMOVED AND RELOCATED

- 5.1 An AWTS may only be reused where the AWTS is subject to a current certificate of accreditation by the NSW Department of Health.
- 5.2 Any new installation will require Council approval after assessing the suitability of the site and the proposed use for the tank.
- 5.3 The removal and relocation of an AWTS shall be performed by an AWTS manufacturer, installer or service agent familiar with the AWTS brand.
- 5.4 The contents of the AWTS are to be removed by pump out tanker.
- 5.5 The sides, lid, baffles, components and square junctions of the AWTS should be hosed down as the tanker is removing the contents.
- 5.6 The tank should then be filled with clean water and disinfected to a minimum level of 5 mg/L of free residual chlorine, with a one half hour contact time.
- 5.7 All irrigation lines and spray heads, sprinklers, drippers and the like are to be flushed with potable water for 5 minutes. Should the irrigation lines be connected to the reticulated water supply the installation shall comply with Yass Valley Council's requirements.
- 5.8 The tank may then be emptied and removed. Tanks of reinforced concrete may only be removed where the structural integrity of the tank can be maintained. Only tanks certified as complying with AS1546 shall be reused as septic tanks.
- 5.9 The pumps, blowers and internal components of the AWTS must be removed by an AWTS manufacturer or service agent for use only as spare parts. The manufacturer or service agent must remove such parts in a manner which will not contaminate the environment or compromise the occupational health and safety of themselves or others.
- 5.10 All mechanical and electrical items such as pumps and blowers must be renewed (not reconditioned), and covered by warranty. Valve diffusers and media may be reused and are to be cleaned and serviced.
- 5.11 Council's conditions of approval for a new installation apply. The maintenance of the reinstalled AWTS must be carried out by a service contractor to the satisfaction of Council.