



# Decommissioning disused wastewater systems

Under the Health (Treatment of Sewage and Disposal of Effluent and Liquid Waste) Regulations 1974, the owner of a property must decommission any disused apparatus for the treatment of sewage (such as disused septic tanks and aerobic treatment units), when a property is connected to the sewer.

## When do I have to decommission my septic tank

- If there is a material change in the use of the premises, (for example the conversion of a residence to a child care centre) decommissioning must occur not more than 60 days after the day on which the change in use occurred.
- Decommissioning must occur not more than 60 days after every person who was an owner of the premises at the time the premises was connected to the sewer ceases to be an owner of the premises.
- If foundations for a building on the premises are to be built closer than 1.2 metres from the apparatus or a building is to be constructed above the apparatus, decommissioning must occur before building works commence.

## How is a wastewater system decommissioned?

- Any remaining wastewater in the system is pumped out and taken away by an approved liquid waste contractor.
- Then, septic tanks or aerobic treatment units or greywater systems are removed.
- Where removal of the system is not practicable, the base of the tanks must be broken up and the entire system backfilled with clean fill.

## Who can decommission a septic tank?

Only licensed and approved personnel can decommission septic tanks. The Yellow Pages telephone directory contains a list of “Septic tank removal” companies who able to decommission your septic tank.

## Who is liable to pay for the cost incurred when there is change in property ownership?

Since the cost associated with decommissioning can be costly, it is advisable for prospective purchasers of a property to determine if decommissioning has already occurred. If it has not, such costs should be taken into consideration by purchasers at the time of offer and acceptance.

## **More Information:**

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