

Fact Sheet 10

Decommissioning your wastewater system

There are around 6000 properties within the Shire of Nillumbik that are not connected to mains sewerage. These properties are serviced by an onsite wastewater disposal system (septic tank system). Wastewater if not properly managed can impact on public health and the environment.

There are 10 fact sheets about onsite wastewater systems:

1. Conventional septic tanks
2. Aerated wastewater treatment plants
3. Sand filters
4. Split system
5. Common disposal methods for primary treatment
6. Common disposal methods for secondary treatment
7. Purchasing a dwelling in Nillumbik
8. Greywater reuse
9. Indigenous plants and grasses for transpiration
10. Decommissioning your domestic wastewater system

As dwellings in the Shire become connected to mains reticulated sewer, existing onsite wastewater systems (septic tanks and treatment plants) become redundant.

For public health and environmental reasons they must be decommissioned by a licensed plumber. The information in this fact sheet will provide a basic understanding of what decommissioning works must be undertaken once a property has been connected to the mains sewer.

Decommissioning your wastewater system

Once connected to the reticulated sewer the following decommissioning works must be undertaken:

1. A licensed plumber must disconnect and cap all pipes connected from the dwelling to the onsite wastewater system.
2. A licensed waste service provider must conduct a final pump out (de-sludge) of the onsite wastewater system. The service provider must also hose down all inside surfaces of the tank during the pump out. This should be completed within 14 days of connection to the reticulated sewer.
3. If the onsite wastewater system is a treatment plant, all internal components are to be hosed down during the de-sludging. This process is

to be completed by a licensed waste service provider.

4. The tank must be disinfected by spreading hydrated lime over the internal surfaces (and if applicable internal components) and lid. This should be done in accordance with the WorkSafe safety precautions associated with working with lime (e.g. gloves, safety goggles and not using lime on a windy day). Under no circumstances should anyone enter the tank to spread the lime or for any reason as vapours in confined spaces can be toxic.
5. To demolish the tank, the bottom of the tank must be broken and then the lid and those parts of the walls that are above ground are collapsed into the tank. The tank must be backfilled with a free draining soil and hydrated lime. Garden or turf can then be placed over the top.
6. The licensed plumber carrying out the decommissioning must complete Council's septic decommissioning declaration form and submit a copy to Council.

Reuse of decommissioned wastewater tanks for the collection of stormwater

It is possible to use a decommissioned wastewater system for stormwater storage; however Council do not recommend it.

For information

For information on onsite wastewater systems contact Environmental Health on 9433 3340.

Given the age of most tanks, it is likely that the decommissioned tank will have cracks and other imperfections.

Stormwater stored in old wastewater systems can only be used for watering gardens and lawns and cannot be used for any other purpose such as topping up of swimming pools. The tank and associated irrigation system must be labelled in accordance with the AS3500 to indicate that the water is not fit for human consumption.

Disinfection process for decommissioned septic tanks for stormwater collection

Prior to using an old wastewater system for stormwater storage, the following disinfection procedure must be performed.

1. The sides, lid, baffle and square junctions of the tank must be hosed down during the de-sludging.
2. The inlet and outlet must be capped and the tank filled with fresh water and disinfected.

Generally a 100 mg/l of pool chlorine (calcium hypochlorite or sodium hypochlorite) will provide a minimum level of 5mg/l of free residual chlorine, with 30 minutes of contact time. The lid must be exposed to the chlorine.

3. The chlorine is not to be neutralised and must be allowed to dissipate naturally for at least one week, during which time the water must not be used.
4. The contents of the tank must be emptied by a licensed waste service provider.
5. A licensed plumber can connect the tank to collect stormwater.

