

# Decommissioning Septic Tanks

## *A guide on decommissioning septic tanks*

### What is decommissioning?

Once a sewer connection is available to a property, it must be connected within five years of the Water Corporation advising of its availability. If the property is sold, it has to be connected within one year of the settlement date. Septic tanks must be 'decommissioned' to prevent them from collapsing in the future, possibly causing damage or injury.

**Contact the Water Corporation on 13 13 95 for more information on the infill sewerage program.**

## *When do I have to decommission?*

The City's Public Health Service strongly recommends that onsite effluent disposal systems be decommissioned soon after a property is connected to mains sewage. However, the Regulations legally require decommissioning at the following times:

- a. Not more than 60 days after ownership of the property has changed. The cost of decommissioning can be high, so it is necessary to obtain some assurances that it has occurred. Often both the person selling the property and the prospective buyer negotiate the decommissioning requirements during settlement; however, it is ultimately the purchaser's responsibility to ensure that the system is decommissioned
- b. If the foundations for a building on the premises are to be built closer than 1.2m from the apparatus or a building is to be constructed above the apparatus. Decommissioning must occur before any building works commence
- c. If there is a 'material change of use' of the property, within 60 days. For example, a residence is turned into a business; the system must be decommissioned not more than 60 days after the change of use has occurred.



Septic Tank to decommission.



Soakwell being emptied.

## *How do I decommission my old system?*

1. Septic tanks, leach drains and soak wells must be emptied entirely by a Licensed Liquid Waste Contractor
2. After emptying, septic tanks, leach drains and soak wells should, if possible, be completely removed from the site. If it is not practicable to remove septic tanks, leach drains or soak wells (eg. access is not available for machinery) the lids must be removed and the bottom of septic tanks broken up
3. The excavations, septic tanks and leach drains or soak wells must then be filled with clean fill e.g. yellow sand, and then thoroughly compacted.

## *Does the City keep records of decommissioned systems?*

The City's Public Health Service does not maintain records of properties that have decommissioned their septic systems.

The requirement to decommission is required by the Regulations, and compliance is the responsibility of the individual property owners.

In some circumstances, the City's Environmental Health Officers may be able to assist in locating plans or diagrams on the location of old systems. However, if historical plans are provided, they should be used as a guide as they were often diagrammatic only.

**Disclaimer:** This document is a guide only. For full details refer to the Health (Treatment of Sewage & Disposal of Effluent & Liquid Waste) Regulations 1974.