

Advisory Note 3 — Revised January 2017

Destruction, Removal or Reuse of Septic Tanks, Collection Wells, Aerated Wastewater Treatment Systems (AWTS) and other Sewage Management Facilities (SMF)

This advisory note has been developed to assist local councils when dealing with applications to reuse septic tanks, collection wells and or aerated wastewater treatment systems (AWTS). It should be read in conjunction with the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES ARE SEPTIC TANKS, COLLECTION WELLS, AWTS, ETC TO BE REUSED AS VESSELS FOR HOLDING WATER FOR DRINKING PURPOSES, OR FOR ANY INTERNAL HOUSEHOLD DOMESTIC PURPOSE.

Existing septic tanks, collection wells and AWTS become redundant where reticulated sewerage progresses through an area and premises connect. Questions are asked periodically by the public about the fate of the redundant SMF. These onsite SMF may be demolished or potentially reused onsite as a storm water storage vessel. There is also potential for these systems to be sold second hand and reinstalled. The existing septic tank, where suitable, potentially may also be used when the premises is upgraded to an AWTS installation.

Where it is feasible to reuse a septic tank, collection well, or AWTS there are several precautions that need to be observed to ensure that public health risk is minimised. The reuse and/or removal of a septic tank, collection well or AWTS shall only be carried out after the premises are connected to sewer or to an alternative form of SMF.

During times of water restrictions the water supply authority should be contacted to determine if it is a permissible use of water to hose out a SMF prior to its reuse or relocation.

This guideline considers the following circumstances.

1. Septic Tanks / Collection Wells

- 1.1 Demolition
- 1.2 Reuse for Stormwater Storage
- 1.3 Upgrade to AWTS
- 1.4 Removed and Relocated

2. AWTS

- 2.1 Demolition
- 2.2 Used as Domestic Greywater Treatment System
- 2.3 Removed and Relocated

If reuse of a different type of SMF is under consideration then the intent of these guidelines should be met.

1. Septic Tank / Collection Well:

1.1 Demolition On-Site

1.1.1 The contents of the septic tank / collection well are to be removed by a method acceptable to the local council, either by tanker removal to an appropriate authorised site or pumped into the existing disposal trench if of sufficient capacity and which then should be sealed. The contents of a septic tank or collection well must not be broadcast or discharged above ground.

1.1.2 The sides, lid, baffle or partition (if fitted) and square junctions of the tank should be hosed down as the waste is being removed.

1.1.3 The tank is to be treated by liberally broadcasting "Builders' (hydrated) Lime" over the exposed surfaces. It is advisable to wear personal protective equipment.

1.1.4 Several holes should be punched or drilled into the base 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 or rubble and topped with clean soil. This should be performed to ensure that voids cannot develop which would allow collapse and injury in the future.

1.2 Reused On Site as a Storm Water Storage and Irrigation Tank

1.2.1 The water from such a stormwater or irrigation tank may be used for garden purposes but not for topping up swimming pools. Nor should the water be used for internal household purposes such

as for toilet flushing, or in laundry tubs, washing machines, bathrooms or kitchen.

1.2.2 For reuse on site as a non-domestic water containing vessel the contents are to be removed either to a site acceptable to the local council or pumped into the existing disposal trench if of sufficient capacity which then should be sealed. The contents of a septic tank or collection well must not be broadcast or discharged above ground.

1.2.3 The sides, lid, baffle or partition (if fitted) and square junctions of the tank should be hosed down as the waste is being removed.

1.2.4 The tank should be filled with fresh water and disinfected to a minimum level of 5 mg/L of free residual chlorine with a half hour contact time. The chlorine should be allowed to dissipate naturally at least overnight and not be neutralised.

1.2.5 The inlet(s) and outlet(s) of the vessel should be sealed. Pumps and other accessories may then be installed and connected to an irrigation system. The tank is to be mosquito proofed and fitted with a strainer or first flush device to prevent the introduction of coarse particles and materials.

1.2.6 The tank is to be labelled as containing water unfit for human consumption.

1.2.7 Pipes, fittings or fixtures in accordance with the water supply authority requirements may only be used. No cross connection is to be made with any potable water supply, nor should the vessel be likely to contaminate any potable water supply. Backflow prevention devices may need to be installed in accordance with the water supply authority directions.

1.2.8 Any overflow is to be directed to the storm water discharge or as specified by the local council.

1.3 Upgrading to AWTS

An existing septic tank may be used in conjunction with an AWTS on the same site provided:

1.3.1 The existing septic tank is of at least the same size and capacity of the septic tank of the accredited AWTS and the existing septic tank is not to be relocated elsewhere on the same site;

1.3.2 The contents of the septic tank are to be removed either to a site acceptable to the local council or pumped into the existing disposal trench if of sufficient capacity which then should be sealed. The contents of a septic tank or collection well must not be broadcast or discharged above ground.

1.3.3 The septic tank when inspected by a competent person such as the installer of the AWTS or a plumber / drainer is found to be in a suitable condition and in conformity with AS/NZS 1546.1:2008.

1.3.4 Written approval under section 68 of the Local Government Act from the local council to alter the SMF must be obtained prior to the upgrade and the approval to operate must be reassessed.

1.4 Removed and Relocated

1.4.1 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 Ministry of Health.

1.4.2 The contents of the septic tank and/or collection well are to be removed either to a site acceptable to the local authority or pumped into the existing disposal trench if of sufficient capacity which then should be sealed. The contents of a septic tank or collection well must not be broadcast or discharged above ground.

1.4.3 The sides, lid, baffle or partition (if fitted) and square junctions of the tank should be hosed down as the waste is being removed.

1.4.4 The inlets and outlets should be plugged and 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 minimum one half hour contact time. The lid should be exposed to the chlorine solution. The chlorine should be allowed to dissipate naturally at least overnight and not be neutralised.

1.4.5 The contents of the tank and/or well may be then emptied as stated above in 1d.2 and the trench should be sealed. The septic tank and/or collection well may be removed if the structural integrity of the tank and/or well can be maintained.

1.4.6 Approval of the local council under section 68 of the Local Government Act is to be obtained before the vessel(s) is reinstalled.

2. AWTS

2.1 Demolition On-Site

2.1.1 The waste contents of the AWTS are to be removed by a method acceptable to the local council, either by tanker removal to an appropriate site or pumped into a disposal trench (if one exists) and sealed. The liquid content of the AWTS is not to

be irrigated using the land application system and is not to be discharged to the environment.

2.1.2 The sides, lid, baffles or partitions, components and square junctions of the AWTS should be hosed down as the waste is being removed.

2.1.3 The pumps, blowers and internal components of the AWTS may be either collapsed into the AWTS or selectively removed by the owner/occupier, an AWTS manufacturer or service agent for proper disposal to landfill. The owner/occupier, manufacturer or service agent must remove such parts in a manner which will not contaminate the environment or compromise the health and safety of themselves or others. Un-retrieved components must be left in the AWTS.

2.1.4 The AWTS and remaining components are to be disinfected by broadcasting "Builders' (hydrated) Lime" over the exposed surfaces. It is advisable to wear personal protective equipment.

2.1.5 Several holes should be punched or drilled into the base of the tank. The lid and those parts of the walls, baffle and square junctions above the ground should be demolished and also collapsed into the tank and the tank filled with clean soil or rubble and topped with clean soil.

2.1.6 All irrigation lines and spray head, sprinklers, drippers and the like are to be flushed with potable water for 5 minutes. If the irrigation lines are to be connected to the reticulated water supply the installation shall comply with the water supply authority requirements and a backflow prevention device installed.

2.2 Used as a Domestic Greywater Treatment System (DGTS)

The AWTS may be used as a domestic greywater treatment system provided:

2.2.1 The premises is connected to the sewer and the proposal is acceptable to the local council under its wastewater management strategy or policy;

2.2.2 The AWTS is subject to a current "Certificate of Accreditation" issued by the NSW Ministry of Health;

2.2.3 Only greywater is discharged to the AWTS, ie blackwater from any toilet, bidette or bidet is not connected;

2.2.4 Excess treated greywater or untreated greywater is discharged to the sewer when the land application system is overloaded;

2.2.5 The land application system has been reassessed by the owner/occupier to the local council's satisfaction as being suitable for the land application system management of treated greywater;

2.2.6 Prior approval is obtained from the local council to alter and to operate the AWTS as an DGTS; and

2.2.7 The maintenance of the AWTS is carried out by a service contractor suitable to the local council.

NOTE: *It is not necessary to pump out or recommission the AWTS unless maintenance such as desludging is required.*

2.3 Removed and Relocated

2.3.1 AWTS may only be reused where the AWTS is subject to a current "Certificate of Accreditation" by the NSW Ministry of Health.

2.3.2 The removal and relocation of an AWTS shall be performed by an AWTS manufacturer, installer or service agent familiar with the AWTS brand.

2.3.3 The waste contents of the AWTS are to be removed by a method acceptable to the local council, either by tanker removal to an approved site or pumped to a disposal trench if of sufficient capacity which then should be sealed. The contents of a septic tank or collection well must not be broadcast or discharged above ground.

2.3.4 The sides, lid, baffles or partitions, components and square junctions of the AWTS should be hosed down as the waste is being removed.

2.3.5 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 minimum one half hour contact time.

2.3.6 All irrigation lines and spray head, sprinklers, drippers and the like are to be flushed with potable water for 5 minutes. If the irrigation lines are to be connected to the reticulated water supply the installation shall comply with the water supply authority requirements and a backflow prevention device installed.

2.3.7 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.

2.3.8 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.

2.3.9 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.

2.3.10 Maintenance of the re-installed AWTS must be carried out by service contractor to the satisfaction of the local council.

2.3.11 Installation approval of the local council is to be obtained before the AWTS is reinstalled.
