

Fact Sheet

Date: August 2017

Ref: DOC/17/48797

Version: 1.0

Shipping Containers

Shipping containers are steel boxes designed for transportation of goods. Reusing them as buildings or sheds may seem attractive – but there are some important things to think about first. This Fact Sheet outlines what you need to know about adapting containers to new uses.

Containers for temporary storage

Containers used as temporary storage are still being used as part of their original use (transportation) and don't need special approval.

If you adapt a container as a permanent on-site structure, you will need to consider planning and building requirements.

Containers as building site sheds

A container used as a construction site shed does not need approval while work is performed onsite. After you have finished work onsite, you must remove the container.

Don't forget about planning (development approval)

If you're thinking of putting a shipping container anywhere on your property, the first thing you need to do is check with your local council to see if you will be complying with your local planning scheme.

The planning scheme will determine:

- where you can put a shipping container;
- how many you can have on your property; and
- if the shipping container will be an eyesore (weathered or damaged containers can be ugly!)

You may need to apply for development approval to place a container on your property.

Shipping containers adapted as buildings for storage

A shipping container used for storage or as a home workshop is similar to using a pre-fabricated metal shed for the same purpose. Containers are classed as Low Risk Work if they are:

- used as a non-habitable structure (shed, garage, workshop, animal shelter etc.),
- only one container high and not stacked,
- placed at ground level, or on a base or pad (no more than 300mm high), so that they can be tied down,
- sited not less than 900mm from a property boundary,
- in a bushfire-prone area, sited not less than 6m from any habitable building,

- roof water runoff does not cause a nuisance to others, and
- not erected over or near pipes (water, sewer) or buried services such as electric cables

If the work is \$20,000 you must pay statutory fees or levies based on the cost of the building project.

Low Risk Building Work:

- can be erected by the owner (who takes on all responsibility)
- does not need a licensed builder or building surveyor
- does not need a building approval (e.g. building permit or a notification to council)

Shipping containers adapted as habitable buildings

If you're planning on turning a shipping container into a living space or work place, you will need to engage a building designer who will advise you on the process for getting building approval for modifying containers for a new use. A building incorporating containers must comply with the National Construction Code. A building surveyor must assess designs and certify them against that Code.

Some of the challenges in adapting them as liveable spaces are:

- structural integrity (when walls are cut and supports welded in)
- making them energy efficient is tricky
- can result in small narrow rooms with low ceilings.

Dealing with stormwater

Like sheds or other outbuildings, you will need to ensure that runoff from the container does not cause a nuisance to neighbours.

- If you're in a residential area, you may be able to connect a downpipe into existing stormwater infrastructure. You must hire a licensed plumber for that work.
- If there isn't an existing stormwater drain that you can connect to, you will need to talk to your plumber about a solution.
 - If you are in a rural area, you may be able to let the runoff soak into sub-soil drainage trenches without water causing a problem to other buildings on your land or your neighbours.

Find a licensed practitioner (e.g. designer, building, building surveyor or plumber):

Search for a licensed practitioner at www.justice.tas.gov.au/building

This document has been produced and published by the Consumer Building and Occupational Services Division of the Department of Justice. Although every care has been taken in the production of the work, no responsibility is accepted for the accuracy, completeness, or relevance to the user's purpose, of the information. Those using it for whatever purpose are advised to verify it with the relevant government department, local government body or other source and to obtain any appropriate professional advice. The Crown, its officers, employees and agents do not accept liability however arising, including liability for negligence, for any loss resulting from the use of or reliance upon the information and/or reliance on its availability at any time.