

RAINWATER HARVESTING EDITORIAL

Australia is a dry country with a high per capita water use. A growing population with increasing demand on existing infrastructure has created water shortages in many parts of the country including Cairns.

The collection and use of rainwater from house roofs in new and existing urban developments can significantly reduce mains water consumption where this water is used for non-human consumption. This reduces the demand on existing supply and infrastructure and can greatly assist with reduced stormwater run-off.

The water used for human consumption which is required to be of higher quality, is reported to represent less than 5 % of all water supplied to residential properties.

In Queensland, like many other Australian states, it is now a mandatory requirement to install a 5000 litre rain water tank to capture and store water for toilet, laundry and garden use in all new homes. A \$500 government rebate is also available to install a tank for an existing home.

A rainwater tank when used with a pump and automatic mains back up facility ensures a priority is given to the use of rainwater to the approved appliance. When the tank is empty or a power failure is experienced, an automatic switching back to mains water will occur. This maintains a constant supply of water for all approved uses.

When installed by a licensed plumber, your rainwater harvesting system will include a leaf eater, first flush diverter and leaf catcha to give the tank protection from leaf build up and mosquitoes.

For further information and to obtain a one (1) page guide for retrofitting rainwater tanks in cyclonic areas including Council permits, please contact Emma Thirkell from the Tropical Green Building Network on 4053 1274 or go to <http://www.greenbuild.com.au/forum/> to download the guide.

The network's charter is to identify, develop and action projects that will have a measurable impact on the uptake of sustainable building practices in Far North QLD. The network meets on the first Wednesday night of every month at the Cairns City Library from 5.30 pm to 7.30 pm.