



## Rainwater collection and use

### Background

Rainwater can be an excellent substitute for mains water in a number of applications such as irrigation, toilet flushing, hot water systems and laundry. Rainwater tanks are also an accepted part of rural living where mains water is not available. Before submitting a proposal to use rainwater, please read the following information that can help you plan your project and fill in the application form.

### Issues

Generally, the use of rainwater has lower health and environment risks than using reclaimed water from sewage, stormwater and greywater. However, there are a few issues to be aware of.

#### ***Rainwater for use as drinking water***

In major urban centres, the use of rainwater for drinking purposes may not be recommended by health departments because of the high quality of mains water and concerns about contamination of rainwater from car exhausts, heavy industrial emissions and animals such as birds. Where there is no reliable mains supply water, the use of rainwater for drinking water is widely practised.

The quality of rainwater will depend on good design and maintenance of the collection system and this will be especially important if water will be used in the community. Before considering using rainwater for this purpose, read the EnHealth “Guidance on use of rainwater tanks” document and check with your local health department.

#### ***Installing rainwater collection and use systems***

There may be specific plumbing and planning regulations when installing rainwater collections systems such as rainwater tanks. For example, in some circumstances, rainwater should not be connected to mains water pipes, and separate pipes and backflow prevention devices may need to be installed. Check with your local government planning agency before submitting a proposal.

#### ***Mosquito hazard***

Rainwater tanks provide a good breeding ground for mosquitos, and especially in tropical areas this can contribute to the spread of mosquito borne diseases. Queensland and Northern Territory have specific regulations about preventing mosquito breeding in tanks. Other prevention tips are in the document “Guidance on use of rainwater tanks”.



### Before you apply

Before you apply, talk to the health department and environment protection agency in your state and your local council to ensure that your proposal is consistent with planning, environmental and health guidelines and regulations. It is your responsibility to obtain any health, planning and environmental approvals or permits that are required to undertake your project.

***Before you apply you should consider:***

- what the rainwater will be used for (e.g. irrigation of a community area)
- the design of your rainwater collection system (e.g. tanks, plumbing connections, dual pipe system)
- the maintenance regime required.

***If your application is successful you will need to provide:***

- copies of your approvals (planning, health, and environment, where required)
- details of how and who will maintain the rainwater system.

### Information to help you in designing your project

The EnHealth “Guidelines on use of rainwater tank” can be downloaded from [http://enhealth.nphp.gov.au/council/pubs/documents/rainwater\\_tanks.pdf](http://enhealth.nphp.gov.au/council/pubs/documents/rainwater_tanks.pdf)

### Contact for more information

Your local planning authority  
Your State/Territory health agency

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#### Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended as a guide only and does not provide an exhaustive list of all the issues to consider when using rainwater tanks. This information does not replace legislation and guidelines in your state or territory.