Rainwater tanks

An alternative water source

Efficient use of water and water conservation are key commitments of the Power and Water Corporation. Alternative water sources such as greywater and rainwater tanks are not areas directly managed by Power and Water, however the following information provides guidance and contact details for people seeking further information on rainwater tanks.

Approving authority for rainwater tank installations

Power and Water is not the authority responsible for approving rainwater tank installations. The Department of Health and Families is the primary agency with responsibility for rainwater tanks – refer to Environmental Health Information Bulletin No 7, *'Requirements for the Use of Rainwater Tanks'* (www.nt.gov.au/health).

Tanks may be subject to certain government requirements such as location, colour, height, noise control for pumping equipment, labelling of tank outlets and associated pipe work. Contact the Building Advisory Services section of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure for further information (www.nt.gov.au/dpi).

Rainwater tank installation subsidies

Power and Water does not currently subsidise the installation of rainwater tanks. The Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport (NRETAS) provides subsidies in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek regions for the installation of rainwater tanks and some water saving devices (www.nt.gov.au/nreta).

Power and Water's requirements in regard to rainwater tanks

If a property has a rainwater tank installed in addition to the water supplied by Power and Water, a backflow prevention device will need to be installed at the water meter. Power and Water may fit a backflow prevention device for households on request.

These devices shall be in accordance with the Rainwater Tank Design and Installation Handbook (HB230-2006) published by Standards Australia (www.standards.com.au).

Power and Water requires that rainwater tanks are not installed over water or sewer easements. Any overflow from a rainwater tank must not be directed to the sewerage system.

Can I use rainwater in my hot water system?

Use of rainwater in a hot water system is currently not recommended for two reasons; increased infection risk, and possible accelerated corrosion of the hot water service tank.

Sizing a rainwater tank

There are a number of different methods of sizing rainwater tanks, some more involved than others. Consider the cost of a rainwater tank and its associated installation costs; the volume of water required (ie will the rainwater be used for toilet flushing and laundry or for irrigation); amount of rainfall and rainfall pattern; roof catchment and amount of guttering; and in areas where there are limited water supply options you may also need to consider security of supply. NRETAS has a technical bulletin for sizing rainwater tanks in Central Australia (www.nt.gov.au/nreta).

PowerWater

Maintaining rainwater tanks

It is important to maintain your rainwater tank and its components to ensure they work effectively and supply high quality rainwater. Regularly clean and check roof, gutters, first flush devices and insect screens. Ensure insect screens are clear and free of leaves, debris and overhanging tree branches. If mosquitoes are present, find out how they entered the tank and block their access. Check the bottom and sides of your tank for sludge every two to three years. If sludge is present, you will need to either siphon the sludge out or empty the tank. Sediment in the tank may block your irrigation system or discolour your toilet cistern and washing machine. For further guidance on maintenance and safe use of rainwater tanks from a health perspective refer to the enHealth website (enhealth.nphp.gov.au).

Some examples of cost comparisons and potential water savings

Water efficient product	**Action** (based on three person household)	**Cost**	**Savings** (kL/year)	**Savings** ($/year)*
Showerhead	Replace old showerhead with water efficient 3-star rated model	$20 to $150	60 (5 min shower)	$43
4 minute shower timer	Fit a timer to your shower and reduce shower times from seven to four minutes	Free to $15	30	$22
Home plumbing	Install a device that recirculates hot water through internal pipes allowing hot water to be instantly available	Variable	17	$13
Tap timer	Fit a tap timer to your irrigation system to save water	$20+	10	$8
Tap flow controller/aerator	Fit flow controller/aerator to kitchen and bathroom taps to reduce flow	$10	15	$11
Toilet	Replace a single flush (12L) toilet with a 4-star rated 4.5/3 L dual flush model	$150+	28	$21
Trigger nozzle	Fit a trigger nozzle to your hose for garden watering and car washing	$20	5	$4
Washing machine	Replace an old inefficient machine with a 4-star rated or higher washing machine	$900+	21	$16
Dishwasher	Replace old dishwasher with 4-star rated (or higher) water efficient model	$1,500+	10	$8
Pool cover	Fit and use a swimming pool cover to reduce evaporation when not in use	$400+	60	$45
Rainwater tank	Fit a 9kL rainwater tank and pump connected to a toilet or hot water system	$3,000+	60	$45
Greywater system	Install a greywater system to reuse water from the laundry and bathroom for use in the garden	$700 to $4000	250	$187
Synthetic grass	Lay synthetic grass that requires no water or fertiliser and always looks green	From $55m2	200	$150

* Approximate dollar savings assume a water supply price at 74.92 cents per kilolitre
Source: Water efficient products (NRETAS)

More information

For further information on rainwater tanks contact the Department of Health and Community Services on 8999 2400 or visit www.nt.gov.au/health.

For water efficiency advice call Power and Water on 1800 245 092 or visit www.powerwater.com.au.