



Coffs Harbour City Council

Information for Installing Rainwater Tanks in the Coffs Harbour City Council Area

Rainwater tanks have long been a source of domestic water in Australia. At one time they were a standard feature of suburban backyards, only to be phased out as urban water supply services expanded.

Today rainwater tanks continue to meet the household needs of many rural residential and farming communities. Tanks are now also being reintroduced into urban areas by people looking for ways to play a part in protecting the environment.

With the re-emerging popularity of rainwater tanks in urban areas, there are some generic questions about installing a rainwater tank that homeowners everywhere will have to consider:

- What size tank is right for my property?
- How much roof area can I divert to the tank?
- Should I use gutter guards and first flush diverters?
- Can I plumb rainwater for use into my house and how much will this cost?
- Do I have to use a licensed plumber?
- What will I do if there is no water in my tank to flush toilets, etc?
- How much energy will a water pump use and how noisy will it be for me/my neighbours?
- What will I do in case of a black out?
- Are there safety issues for children and pets?
- How much maintenance is involved in a rainwater tank?
- Can I drink the water from my rainwater tank?

Most of these questions can be answered by your local rainwater tank manufacturer or supplier.

However, for an answer to the last question about drinking water from your rainwater tank, you should refer to the NSW Department of Health "Rainwater Tanks" brochure, available for free download at http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2007/pdf/rainwater_tanks.pdf

Coffs Harbour Questions

In addition to the above generic design issues, residents of the Coffs Harbour City Council area who are interested in installing a rainwater tank on properties in this area, may ask the following questions (see over) when considering this addition to their homes.



Coffs Harbour City Council local area Rainwater Tank Installation FAQ's

<i>Question</i>	<i>Answer</i>	<i>Help</i>
Does Council have a policy on rainwater tanks in the local area?	Yes	To ensure your rainwater tank will comply with all Council requirements, including water restrictions, see the Urban Rainwater Tank Policy (page 3, Attachment A).
If I get a rainwater tank, will I still be subject to water restrictions?	Possibly	
Do I need a DA (Development Application)?	Possibly	To see if you need a DA and/or what siting requirements are applicable to your rainwater tank, see Part 5, Schedule 1 of the Coffs Harbour City Council Local Environment Plan 2000 (page 6, Attachment B).
Are there rules about where I can have a rainwater tank on my property?	Yes	
Do I have to let Council know about my tank even if I don't need a DA?	Yes	To register your tank and comply with Backflow Prevention rules for Coffs Harbour City Council residents, you must complete the Rainwater Tank Registration (for urban areas) Form available on Council's website. Rainwater Tank Registration (for urban areas) (nsw.gov.au)
Are there Backflow Prevention rules for rainwater tanks in Coffs Harbour City Council area?	Yes	
Can I get a rebate for installing a rainwater tank?	No	Funding for the NSW State Government rebates finished on 30 June, 2011. http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/rebates/ccf_rtw.html Funding for the Australian Commonwealth Government rebates finished on 10 May, 2011. http://www.environment.gov.au/water/programs/nrgi/index.html
Does Coffs Harbour City Council offer a rainwater tank rebate?	No	Coffs Harbour City Council itself does not offer rebates for rainwater tanks. However, Council has a dual flush toilet rebate and two water efficient shower rebate programs for residents connected to town water.

COFFS HARBOUR CITY COUNCIL URBAN RAINWATER TANK POLICY

Excerpt taken from Urban Rainwater Tank Policy

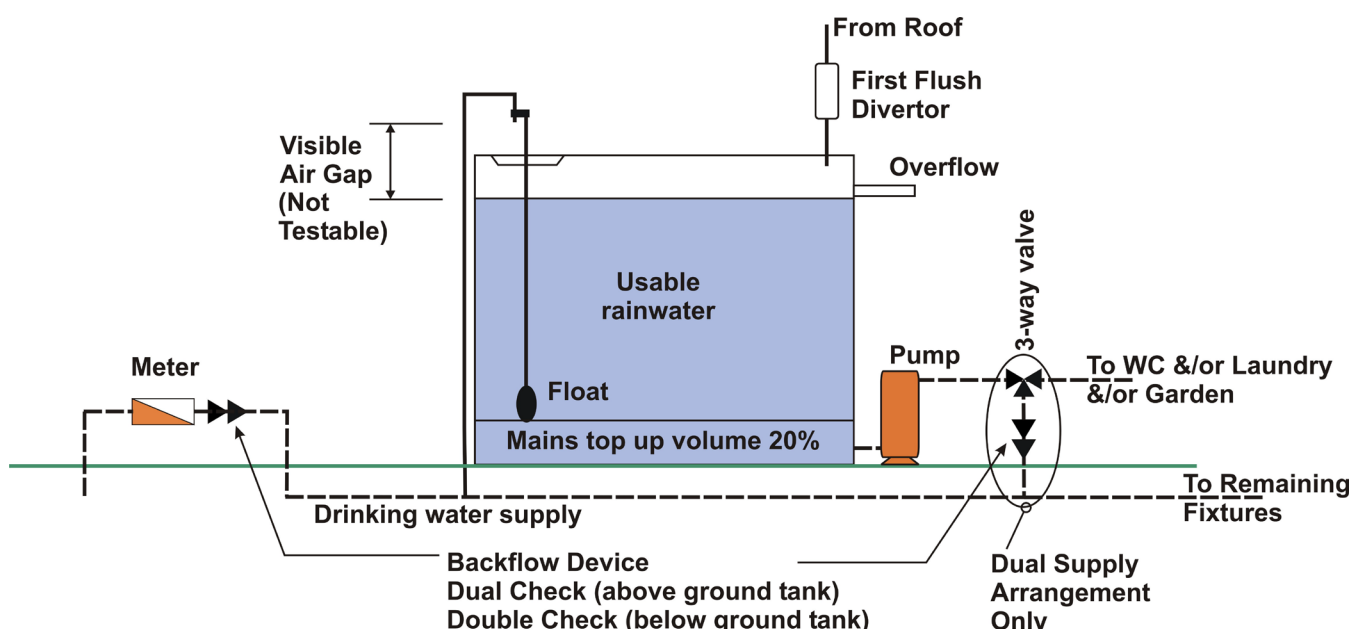
Generally:

1. A Rainwater Tank Registration (for urban areas) form must be submitted to Coffs Harbour City Council to ensure compliance with this Policy and to track installations not requiring development consent.
2. All work is to be carried out by a licensed plumber as per *AS / NZS 3500 & NSW Code of Practice Plumbing and Drainage*.
3. Where approval is given by Coffs Harbour City Council to top up from the mains supply:
 - ❖ The maximum size of the potable water supply line used for topping up shall be 15mm **OR** a flow restrictor must be installed to ensure the filling rate is no more than approx. 2 litres per minute.
 - ❖ There must be a visible air gap (external to the rainwater tank) between the inlet pipe from the mains supply and the invert level of the overflow pipe.
 - ❖ “Topping up” should not take place until the tank is at least 80% empty (a float valve is required to regulate the “topping up”)
 - ❖ All rainwater tanks topped up from the mains supply are categorised as a break tank and as such, must be registered with Coffs Harbour City Council.
3. All tank outlets must be labelled ‘RAINWATER’ on a metallic sign as specified in *AS1319*
4. All pipes carrying rainwater must be labelled ‘RAINWATER’. This can be done using pipe markers for above ground (made in accordance with *AS1345*).
5. Tank overflow water shall run to an approved Council storm water collection point.
6. First flush water diverters are recommended but not mandatory.
7. Pump and pressure systems must be sized to suit owner’s requirements.
8. A backflow prevention device must be installed at the property meter to protect the mains supply. Where a testable device is required, a registration form and initial test certificate is to be forwarded to Coffs Harbour City Council for registration, within 1 week of completion of installation and testing. The type of the device required varies in different situations.
9. Tanks and associated installations shall not adversely impact on the amenity of adjoining properties in terms of size, design, style height and location.
10. All tank / tank stand installations to be structurally sound and comply with manufacturers and / or designers specifications.
11. The rainwater tank must not collect water from a source other than gutters or down pipes or a potable water supply top up.
12. The rainwater tank must not be installed over or immediately adjacent to a water or sewer main.

13. The rainwater tank must not be installed over any structure or fitting used by Coffs Harbour City Council in the maintenance of any water or sewer main or easements.
14. The rainwater tank must be enclosed and any inlet to the tank must be screened or filtered.
15. The rainwater tank must be maintained at all times, so as not to cause a nuisance with respect to mosquito breeding or overland water flow.
16. Where rainwater tanks are connected to mains supply by way of top up system, the property will be subject to any current level of water restrictions imposed.
17. Proximity to other services:

Above ground rainwater services shall **not** be installed within 100mm of any parallel drinking water supply.

Below ground rainwater services shall **not** be installed within 300mm of any parallel drinking water supply.



Maintenance:

Maintenance of a rainwater tank and the quality of the water supplied from a tank are the responsibility of the owner, not Coffs Harbour City Council.

NSW Health does not recommend the use of rainwater tanks for drinking purposes, where reticulated drinking water supply is available.

- ❖ The roof, gutters and inlet should be cleaned regularly to ensure a safe water supply is captured in the rainwater tank.
- ❖ Leaves and debris should be removed from the gutter quarterly and overhanging branches trimmed and removed where possible.
- ❖ The inlet screen should be removed, thoroughly cleaned and replaced quarterly.

Backflow Protection:

1. For above ground rainwater tanks:

20 mm and 25mm meters with Potable Water Top up arrangement

- ❖ Coffs Harbour City Council will replace the existing meter free of charge with a new integral dual check valve meter. (if not already fitted). This will be done on receipt of the customer's application form or by calling Council to arrange for the meter exchange.
- ❖ **32mm and larger meters with Potable Water Top up arrangement**
A minimum of a dual check valve must be installed adjacent to the meter.
- ❖ **All meters with Dual supply arrangement**
A dual check valve must be installed adjacent to the meter and immediately upstream on the potable supply, at the point of interconnection. An approved 3-way valve is required at the point of interconnection.

2. For below ground rainwater tanks:

A new meter is not required but a testable backflow device (DCV) must be installed at the meter. Where the below ground tank has a dual supply arrangement a testable backflow device (DCV) is also required immediately upstream on the potable supply, at the point of interconnection. An approved 3-way valve is required at the point of interconnection.

3. Testable Backflow Devices:

All costs associated with testable backflow devices are the responsibility of the owner. The device must be registered with Coffs Harbour City Council and the owner must arrange for a licensed plumber/tester to test the device once a year.

Testable devices include:

- ❖ Double Check Valves (DCV)
- ❖ Reduced Pressure Zone Devices (RPZD)
- ❖ Registered Air Gaps

4. External Hose Taps:

All external hose taps must be fitted with a hose connection Atmospheric Vacuum Breaker (AVB)

Other Commercial Systems:

Coffs Harbour City Council will assess all commercial tank top up and/or integrated systems for suitability, as they become available and they will be added to an approved systems list.

Alternative Water Supplies:

Where an alternative water supply (other than rainwater) is reticulated on a property an RPZD backflow prevention device must be installed at the water meter.

Alternative water supplies include:

- ❖ Treated grey water reuse
- ❖ Reclaimed wastewater
- ❖ Septic treatment/reuse systems

COFFS HARBOUR CITY COUNCIL LOCAL ENVIRONMENT PLAN 2000

Part 5

SCHEDULE 1 – ACTIVITIES NOT REQUIRING CONSENT AND NOT PROHIBITED BY PLAN

WHAT CAN BE ERECTED AND USED OR CARRIED OUT?	EXEMPTION REQUIREMENTS
<p>WATER TANKS (at or above ground level) in RURAL AREAS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not more than two tanks per dwelling and another two associated with farm buildings not near a dwelling. • Maximum 17,000 litre capacity per tank. • Maximum height of 2.4m. • Must be structurally adequate. • Situated no closer to a street than an associated dwelling. • Installation to meet manufacturer's and/or designer's instructions. • Not involving clearing of bushland in an Environmental Protection zone.
<p>WATER TANKS (at or above ground level) in URBAN AREAS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not more than one per dwelling or other premises. • Maximum installed height above ground level of 1.8m including any stand (maximum stand height of 450mm). • Maximum storage capacity of 10,000 litres. • Located in the rear yard/or no closer to the street than the front alignment of a dwelling. • All tank/tank stand installations to be structurally sound and comply with manufacturer's and/or designer's instructions. • Installed as per manufacturer's instructions, including in respect of any stand. • Pumps not used if a noise nuisance to neighbours would occur. • Not involving clearing of bushland in an Environmental Protection zone.

(Excerpt taken from Page 52)

For further queries related to DAs or siting requirements for rainwater tanks, please call Council's Land Use, Health and Development Department on telephone (02) 6648 4000.