

Rainwater Tank Policy – Quick Reference Summary (Nov 05)

In March 2004 the Premier announced that rainwater tanks would need to be plumbed into South Australian housing developments built from July 2006. This sheet answers some basic questions about the mandatory rainwater tank policy requirements.

1. What is meant by 'rainwater tank'?

'Rainwater tank' means storages that are purpose-designed to collect rainfall runoff from roofs. A variety of rainwater storage vessels are available including traditional stand-alone tanks, modular tanks and some other proprietary products. Provided they meet all relevant regulatory requirements that may apply all such storages are legitimate forms of rainwater tank.

2. Why will rainwater be plumbed into houses rather than required for outdoor use?

Plumbing tank rainwater into houses for uses such as toilet flushing, clothes washing and for hot water supply ensures that rainwater can be well-used year round. This allows much of the rainfall from the connected roof area to be captured for use, even from quite small rainwater tanks. By comparison, use of rainwater solely for garden watering cannot capture and use the resource as effectively. This is mainly because garden watering is a summer activity when rainfalls are not significant and the amount of water supplied from a small tank will be limited.

3. Does the policy prevent rainwater from being used for garden watering or other suitable outdoor uses?

No. In fact, the Policy may encourage increased use of rainwater for garden watering or other suitable outdoor purposes.

4. Does the policy mandate tank rainwater to be plumbed in for drinking?

No. It remains the right of individuals to use their tank rainwater for drinking, should they wish to. The Department of Health provides advice for those who want to drink tank rainwater.

5. Will all new housing development in South Australia from July 2006 be required to install a rainwater tank plumbed into the house? (developments approved after 1 July 2006)

The requirements would generally apply to new Class 1 buildings, which are defined by the Building Code of Australia BCA2005 - Volume 2) as follows:

- (a) **Class 1a** – a single dwelling being-
 - (i) a detached house; or
 - (ii) one of a group of two or more attached dwellings, each being a building, separated by a *fire-resisting* wall, including a row house, terrace house, town house or villa unit; or
- (b) **Class 1b** – a boarding house, guest house, hostel or the like-
 - (i) with a total area of all floors not exceeding 300sqm measured over the enclosing walls of the Class 1b building; and
 - (ii) in which not more than 12 persons would ordinarily be resident;

which is not located above or below another dwelling or another Class of building other than a *private garage*.

- The requirements will also generally apply to existing Class 1 buildings when significant building extension is undertaken involving at least 50m² of additional roof extension. (extensions excludes garages and verandas which are Class 10 structures).
- However, the requirements **do not** apply for the following situations:
 - All types of building other than Class 1 buildings;
 - Dwellings located in Out of Council areas, the Municipal Council of Roxby Downs and the District Council of Coober Pedy. These areas have very low, highly variable rainfall which limits the water savings that would result from implementing the policy in these areas;

- Dwellings connected to dual reticulated (fixed pipe) water supply systems where they are plumbed into the home e.g. houses with both a mains supply and recycled water supply for toilet flushing.

6. What are the minimum technical requirements?

The table below outlines the minimum technical requirements.

	Rainwater storage device minimum capacity:	Minimum roof area connected to rainwater storage:	Supply from rainwater storage to be connected to:
NEW BUILDINGS	1 kilolitre dedicated rainwater storage for in-house use	50 square metres, however if the entire building roof is smaller, 100% of the roof area	At least one toilet OR all laundry cold water outlets OR hot water supply
EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING BUILDINGS WHERE NEW ROOF AREA IS > 50 square metres	As above	50 square metres	As above

Rainwater tank systems must also comply with:

- Seamless automatic switching – a suitable device must be installed so that supply automatically switches between rainwater and alternative supply (typically mains water) to ensure a reliable supply system.
- Mosquito control - tanks need to be adequately screened.
- Backflow prevention – devices must be fitted to minimise risk of backflow into mains water systems, compliant with Plumbing Regulations.

As these minimum requirements cannot be guaranteed to supply water for these purposes 100 per cent of the time a supplementary supply will usually be required for times when rainwater is not available – this might, typically, be by mains water where this is available.

8. How much rainwater will be available?

For areas of South Australia with average annual rainfalls in excess of 300 mm the minimum requirements will typically provide 10 to 25 kilolitres of rainwater per year. Supply in drier areas of Adelaide would be about 15 to 20 kilolitres per year. Additional supplies above these minimums can often be achieved by, for example, connecting to the rainwater tank a larger roof area and/or connecting rainwater to more than one of the proposed uses mentioned in the response to question 6.

9. How will the policy be implemented?

Planning SA and SA Water are working on regulatory issues to implement the policy. Information will be developed for industry sectors including plumbers and developers, and the public.

10. Can communal rainwater systems be installed to supply multiple houses?

Yes, provided that each Class 1 building has a storage equivalent to at least 1000 litres, that each building contributes to the storage and that the communal tank is plumbed to all of the Class 1 buildings.