

Rainwater tanks

Installation requirements under the Queensland Development Code

Frequently asked questions

Do I have to install a rainwater tank in my new house or building?

On 1 February 2013, laws that required the installation of rainwater tanks (or other supplementary water supply systems, such as greywater treatment plants) with a new house or a commercial building where the property was located in a reticulated town water area changed.

Rainwater tanks are now only required with new houses and/or commercial buildings where a local government has been approved to opt-in to the Queensland Development Codes (QDC) for:

- **residential buildings:** Mandatory Part 4.2–Rainwater tanks and other supplementary water supply systems (QDC 4.2), and
- **commercial buildings:** Mandatory Part 4.3–Supplementary water sources (QDC 4.3).

To find out if you are required to install a rainwater tank in your local government area go to www.hpw.qld.gov.au where a list of approved local governments is published.

How does a local government opt-in?

In order to opt-in to the QDC a local government must make application to the Minister for Housing and Public Works. The application must demonstrate that by opting-in to the QDC there will be a net benefit to the community of requiring rainwater tanks with new houses and/or buildings.

The local government can also request to vary some aspects of the QDC. For example, it may only apply to lots over a certain size or only to part of their council area.

What do I have to do if my local government is approved to opt-in?

Where a local government is approved to opt-in, all applicable performance requirements of the relevant QDC and any local government variations will apply to new buildings. For residential buildings, the rainwater tank must be connected for both outdoor and indoor use. The rainwater tank will be assessed as part of the building and plumbing applications.

Local governments that have been approved to opt-in and information about any local variations is noted with the published list on the department's website.

Can I install a rainwater tank if I want to?

Yes. Housing providers and homeowners can choose to include a rainwater tank with a new or existing house or building.

A rainwater tank can be installed for:

- outdoor use only, such as gardening and car washing, via a hose tap, or
- both outdoor and indoor use, where it also supplies internal fixtures such as toilets and the cold water tap for a washing machine.

What do I have to do if I install a rainwater tank voluntarily?

All rainwater tanks need to be installed to minimum health and safety standards under the QDC (as per Table 1 of the applicable QDC). These standards account for water quality protection, such as mosquito and vermin control, minimising the potential for contamination with town water supplies, have suitable materials for tank design and construction, and have appropriate signage.

Where a rainwater tank is voluntarily installed, it is not required to have:

- a minimum tank size
- a minimum roof catchment area
- internal plumbing connections to supply fixtures, such as toilets and a washing machine
- a continuous supply of water (NB. if the rainwater tank is to be connected to supply water to internal fixture(s) it is recommended that a continuous supply of reticulated town water be provided via an automatic switching device or a trickle top-up).

Do I need any approvals to install a rainwater tank voluntarily?

Where a rainwater tank is voluntarily connected for indoor use to an existing house or building, the plumber must lodge a *Form 4–Notifiable work* for plumbing (as it is plumbed to internal fixtures that have connection to the reticulated town water supply). A Form 4 is not required where a rainwater tank is to be installed for outdoor use only (via a hose tap).

For non-cyclone areas, a building approval is only required where a rainwater tank is greater than 10 square metres in plan area and is more than 2.4 metres in height above ground. However, where it is smaller and shorter than these dimensions, it will not require a building approval.

However, where a property is located within a tropical cyclone area (Wind Region C under AS/NZS1170.2 Wind Loading Code), a building approval is required with the installation of a rainwater tank regardless of its size. Wind Region C covers the immediate coastal areas continuous from Bundaberg to the Queensland-Northern Territory border.

The inclusion of a rainwater tank may also be subject to local government planning requirements for siting and boundary setbacks to correctly locate it on the property. For more information about local planning requirements, contact your local government.

Who installs a rainwater tank?

Where a rainwater tank is to be installed for both indoor and outdoor use, this work must be undertaken by a licensed plumber.

If you are building a new house, your builder may prepare some aspects for the installation of the tank during the construction of your home. For example, roof guttering and downpipes and the concrete slab for its base. A licensed plumber can be sub-contracted to complete its installation.

How can I make the most out of the water from my rainwater tank?

By installing water efficient appliances and fixtures, such as a water efficient washing machine and toilets, water from the rainwater tank can last longer. Many household appliances and fixtures are star rated under the national Water Efficiency and Labelling Standards scheme (WELS), with 0 stars being the least efficient and 6 stars being the most. You can search the star rating for household appliances and fixtures on the WELS website at: www.waterrating.gov.au

More information

More details about rainwater tank installation requirements can be found using the search string 'water supply systems' on the department's website at www.hpw.qld.gov.au.