



Plumbing Newsflash

Proposed changes to plumbing laws to allow greywater use in sewerred areas

Purpose

The purpose of this Newsflash is to provide advice on the Queensland Government's proposal to amend the *Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002* to allow greywater to be used for underground irrigation of gardens in sewerred areas.

Background

The Queensland Government received numerous requests from both local government and the community to remove the prohibition of using greywater in sewerred areas to water gardens. National water reforms, the prolonged drought and resultant water restrictions have all reinforced the interest and support for greywater use in sewerred areas.

Proposed changes to the *Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002*

It is proposed to develop amendments to the *Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002*, and associated regulations to allow homeowners to choose to install systems using greywater for garden watering. Greywater will include water from bathtubs, showers, bathroom hand basins, laundry tubs and washing machines, but not kitchen wastewater, which is frequently contaminated by oils and grease and tends to clog systems. Homeowners will still be able to bucket greywater to water their gardens.

Where will this be allowed?

This option will be available across all Queensland, except where local governments declare part of their area as not suitable for greywater use because of dwelling density, and soil or site specific constraints.

Is it just for houses?

In the first instance this will be limited to domestic premises where the wastewater (blackwater and greywater) generated on the premises is less than 21 equivalent persons. The greywater will only be able to be used for subsurface irrigation of lawns and gardens, or by manual bucketing of greywater for garden watering. Where wastewater generated is equal to or more than 21 equivalent persons, the Environmental Protection Agency will manage greywater use as an environmentally relevant activity under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*.

What will the legislation include?

The *Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002* and associated regulations will include provisions for:

- appropriate certification of greywater diversion systems used in Queensland;

- greywater systems to be designed, installed and operated in accordance with the “Greywater Use Code”, which will contain the technical standards for systems;
- local governments to have powers to approve the installation of greywater systems, including imposing conditions about operation and maintenance, and enforcing compliance with the law and Code;
- greywater systems to include a manual diverter, so that homeowners can divert greywater to the sewer when the plants do not require watering or during periods of wet weather. There will also be an automatic diversion to the sewer, if filters or the irrigation system clog up; and
- homeowners will be responsible for operating and maintaining the system in good working order and in accordance with conditions of approval.

Local Government and Planning will also evaluate and grant model or type specification approval of greywater treatment plants for use in Queensland and develop proposals for qualifications and expertise requirements for persons who design, install, inspect and service greywater use systems.

Consultation

Comment will be sought later this year on draft legislative proposals and a draft Greywater Use Code from the public, local government and industry before any new laws are finalised.

Training will be provided for local government before the new laws come into effect as well as brochures and fact sheets being prepared for homeowners.

In the meantime, questions or comments should be addressed to Mr Peter Beavers, Building Codes Qld, Local Government and Planning, PO Box 31, Brisbane Albert Street, Qld, 4002 or fax or email to the address given below.

Further information

For further information on this topic contact:

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