



National Water Tank Requirements: Rural and Semi-Rural Homes in Australia

Australia is a semi-arid country with hot, dry summers. As such, rural areas are particularly prone to bushfires — rural New South Wales is no exception. Homeowners, particularly those living in rural areas, need to consider this when planning and building their homes.

In rural bushfire areas, an adequate water retention system for firefighting purposes is mandatory on every property. This article investigates NSW property requirements in bushfire prone areas.

BASIX and NSW Regulatory Requirements

When submitting plans for the construction of a new home or a home renovation in a bushfire prone zone, you may be required to include a water storage system for firefighting purposes, which should always have sufficient water available in the event of a fire.

The size of the storage tank required will depend on the size of the property, with rural residential properties of less than 1 hectare needing 10,000 litres per lot and larger rural lifestyle plots of more than 1 hectares requiring 20,000 litres per lot. This is purely water allocated for fighting fires, and is over and above the minimum BASIX water requirements needed for domestic use. For example, if the domestic water requirements for the property are 40,000 litres, you would require an additional 10,000 litres (<1 ha) or 20,000 litres (>1 ha) of water available for fighting fires.

While the [Rural Fire Services](#) have say your water reserve for fighting bushfire may be used for other purposes from time to time, homeowner must ensure water is available to fight fires during peak fire periods.

Water Storage Options and Considerations

BASIX water allocations for domestic household use and firefighting can be stored separately in two individual water tanks, or can be combined in one larger tank that has two separate draw off points:

1. An outlet positioned higher up the tank where water for BASIX household use is withdrawn from the tank; and
2. An outlet near the base of the tank where water used to fight fires is withdrawn.

Storage tanks can be above ground or underground. Above ground tanks must have an access hole that is 200mm wide to enable firefighting tankers to refill directly from the water tank, and have a hardened surface to within 4 meters of the access hole to allow fire trucks to drive up to within range of the storage tank.

Above ground tanks need to be constructed of fire-resistant material such as metal or concrete. Plastic water storage tanks cannot normally be used unless underground, but may in certain circumstances be approved if appropriate protection measures are submitted to justify their use.

No matter which of the above options you settle for, the water storage tank needs to be readily accessible and easy for fire fighters to find, and needs to have an appropriate connection (65mm Storz outlet) for attaching a fire-fighting hose fitted at the bottom of the tank.

All piping, fittings and valves should be metal as opposed to plastic and should be of sufficient diameter to allow an adequate flow of water. Water tanks that are positioned on the side of the building where the fire hazard is greatest should ensure that all external water pipes and fittings above the ground are constructed of metal, and that water pumps have some protection against heat and flames.

These simple precautions are not only regulatory requirements, but could save your home should it ever be threatened by a runaway bushfire.

Web version (current):

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