



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

If you live or have a property away from city areas, then you may need to carefully plan out your sources of water. Such might include rivers and dams, bore water or more obviously rainwater. Properties located in semi-rural regions generally have access to a reticulated water supply. Nonetheless, water tanks are clearly something that can help create sustainable water supply even in urban cities. This article will provide an overview some requirements of installing rainwater tanks in Australia.

### Rainwater Tank Systems and the National Construction Code

The National Construction Code (NCC) was recently adopted by Australian states and territories on 1 May 2016. It incorporates what was previously known as the **Building Code of Australia (BCA)** and the **Plumbing Code of Australia (PCA)**. As such, Australian building and plumbing requirements are now found in a single code. The NCC can be found on the Australian Building Codes Board website.

Within the NCC is what is known as the “6 Star Standard” which are energy efficiency and water saving provisions required in new homes and major renovations. Specific rainwater system requirements include:

- having a minimum rainfall catchment area of 50m<sup>2</sup>
- rainwater storage with a minimum capacity of 2,000 litres
- rainwater storage connected to all flushing devices in all the toilets in the building in order to ensure use of the rainfall for sanitary flushing.

Installation of rainwater tanks must be compliant with the Australian Plumbing and Drainage standards (AS/NZS 3500). This generally means ensuring your overflow leads to appropriate stormwater drainage. Licensed plumbers are often required if plumbing in your rainwater, and certificates or inspections required for interconnections with reticulated water supply since devices are installed to prevent your rainwater flowing back into the pipes of your local water authority.

Additionally, the NCC requires that appropriate screening be used to protect rainwater tanks against mosquitoes and pests, which also helps to ensure maximum water quality in your tank.

While Australian states and territories look to the NCC for base requirements, you also need to be aware to any state and local requirements. We will specifically touch upon some requirements in the states of Queensland and New South Wales which National Poly Industries service.

## Water Tank Requirements in Queensland

Unless your local Council stipulates otherwise, rainwater tank installation is a voluntarily affair if you reside in Queensland. Unlike other states, there are generally no requirements that define:

- 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.

In the past, new houses, commercial and industrial buildings have been required to meet water saving targets through rainwater tanks or grey water treatment plants. The Queensland state government has in recent years [updated these requirements](#) such that if opting for a rainwater tank with a Class 1 building:

- a minimum roof catchment area of half the total roof area or 100m<sup>2</sup> (whichever is less); and
- a minimum capacity of 5,000 litres for detached buildings, or a minimum capacity of 3,000 litres for all other dwellings.

“*Class 1 buildings*” are defined as any single dwelling (a detached house) or one or more attached dwellings separated with a fire-resisting wall, and boarding or guest house, hostel or similar with a total floor area not exceeding 300m<sup>2</sup> and where a maximum of 12 people reside.

To ensure you comply with local requirements, we encourage you to [inquire with your Queensland local council](#). We have put together [an article specifically for the Gympie region](#), which irrespective of where you live in Queensland, you may find of interest.

## Water Tank Requirements in New South Wales

The NSW Government has implemented residential building requirements that aims to deliver sustainable water and energy, known as [BASIX](#). BASIX assessment is required for:

- new buildings that consist of one or more dwellings
- conversions of an existing building to a building that consists of one or more dwellings
- additions and/or alterations to buildings that consist of one or more dwellings with an estimated work cost of \$50,000 or more
- swimming pools with capacity of 40,000L or more.

BASIX certificate aims to achieve a 40% reduction on the consumption of potable water against the state benchmark. [Water tanks](#) are a great way to achieve BASIX certification for your proposed development.

Rainwater collection is assessed based upon:

- the capacity of the rainwater tank being installed
- roof catchment area that will be connected to the rainwater tank
- how the tank water is used
- running overflow from your rainwater tank to another tank for collection and re-use.

In NSW you must also comply with the development regulations articulated in the [State Environmental Planning Policy](#). Many specific requirements are provided depending upon whether your rainwater tank is installed above or below ground. Some of these include:

- plumbing your tank into your house and/or interconnecting to mains water needs to be carried out by a licensed plumber
- your water tank cannot be placed on the footing of an existing building
- screening against mosquitoes and other insects breeding inside is ensured
- the overflow of the tank is connected with an existing stormwater drainage system
- the water tank is placed in the rear yard, behind the building line
- protection against vermin entering the water tank is ensured
- protection against ingress of stormwater and ground water if the tank is partially or completely buried in the ground is ensured.

Please note, that many of these serve as foundational requirements in NSW. You may also have requirements set by [your local council](#). We have also put together specific requirements for [Wagga Wagga](#) and the [Tamworth Region](#) that you might find interesting.

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