

Rainwater Quality and Safety

It is important to capture and store rainwater correctly

Rainwater that is captured and stored correctly is a **safe, economical and sustainable source of quality water**. Rainwater is as safe as any source of water, provided certain safety precautions are taken as part of water capture, storage and distribution. In fact some say that rainwater is **safer than water supplied through mains or reticulated water systems**. Our mains water is typically stored in dams, treated with chemicals such as chlorine to kill of bacteria and make it safe, and then pumped through a network of pipes throughout the community.

Council and Health Department recommendations

Many Local Councils, State Health Departments and Industry Associations have either have developed, or are in the process of developing guidelines for use of rainwater harvesting systems. These guidelines have been developed to help optimise water quality. Key aspects of many of these guidelines are:

1. Incorporating Gutter Mesh Systems - to help ensure gutters do not become blocked with leaves and debris; to prevent mosquito breeding habitats
2. Fitting Rain Heads at gutter downpipes - to separate leaves and debris from the flow of water; to keep mosquitoes out of pipe systems to the tank (especially in "wet" systems)
3. Preventing the First Flush of rainwater from entering the tank - to reduce the amount of roof pollutants
4. Insect proofing all tank openings (inlets and overflow outlets) - to prevent mosquitoes breeding
5. Regular Tank Maintenance of the tank, catchment system, roof and gutters, inlets to ensure a safe supply of water. Desludging may be required every 2-3 years, and whilst regular disinfection should not be necessary, can be undertaken if preferred.