



Media Release– for immediate release 3 August 2017

Stormwater and the Urban Water Paradox

Stormwater symbolises one of the paradoxes of urban water. Our cities have not enough water and too much water at the same time. While we struggle to import expensive water from hundreds of kilometres away we have to build massive drains to prevent flooding from the rain that falls on our cities. Stormwater is a form of Independent Water that has some unique characteristics.

Stormwater comes from rain, it is the runoff from buildings, roads, footpaths and roofs. Unfortunately stormwater can get very dirty. Because our cities are large and full of hard surfaces urban areas can generate a lot of stormwater which flows downhill and is concentrated into small areas. Enough of it put together can cause floods and massive urban damage. But even small amounts of stormwater have polluting levels of chemicals in it that are bad for natural streams, creeks, rivers and large waterways. So stormwater is a problem that needs to be fixed.

“Using Rainwater Harvesting changes stormwater at the top of the catchment before stormwater can accumulate and do a lot of damage. Just holding rainwater and releasing it slowly improves the quality and impact of stormwater.” – Andrew Allan, President Stormwater Australia

Rainwater Harvesting, on the other hand, is a resource that we can use. This is water collected from roofs and is usually high quality suitable for a wide range of uses. One of the key features of Rainwater Harvesting is that it reduces the pollutants, peak flow and volume of stormwater. Although only one roof doesn't make a difference to a whole city, millions of roofs have a big impact.

The Independent Water Council is a newly established Coalition talking about the contribution that non-utility water makes to Australian water security. Independent Water includes rainwater, bore water, bottled water, greywater and storm water. Australia is the driest inhabited continent on earth and Independent Water makes a big contribution to how Australians use water. Over 2 million households or 5 million Australians use a rainwater tank. Rainwater provided an estimated 156 billion litres or 8% of residential water consumption in 2013-14 (ABS Water Account).

Independent Water Council – contact Andrew Allan, 0417 516 756

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Company profile – Independent Water Council

The Independent Water Council is a not for profit alliance of water industry stakeholders including the Association of Rotational Moulders Australasia (The Water Tank Group), Irrigation Australia, Rainwater Harvesting Association of Australia, Australian Water Association, Stormwater Australia and the Australian Wastewater Treatment Association.

The objective of the Council is to market the importance of independent water sources, appropriate resource management & policy development.

Independent Water Council website: www.independentwatercouncil.org