

## Rainwater Tanks & Water Testing

### Rainwater Tanks

Many households within the MidCoast Council area not connected to reticulated water and therefore have rainwater tanks to supply drinking water. A properly maintained rainwater tank and water supply system can provide good quality drinking water. Rainwater from tanks should be clear with little taste or smell and is likely to be safe for most users to consume.

The greatest potential risk to health when using rainwater for drinking purposes comes from harmful microorganisms such as bacteria and parasites from bird or animal droppings, however the risk of harmful organisms being present is low.

### How can my water quality be protected?

The provision of good quality water depends on correct design and installation of the tank along with sensible maintenance of the tank and catchment area including the gutters and roof. Roof catchments and gutters should be inspected and cleared of leaves and other debris regularly. If mosquitos are detected in a tank then the entry point should be located and closed.

First flush devices prevent the first portion of roof run off from entering the tank and will reduce the amount of dust, bird droppings and leaves etc that can accumulate on roofs from being washed into tanks. Tanks should be examined for accumulation of sludge approximately every 2-3 years. If sludge is present in the tank it should be removed by siphon or by complete emptying of the tank (desludging).

If regular maintenance of the catchment area and gutters is undertaken regularly disinfection of rain water should not be necessary.

### Water testing

Council's Water Services Laboratory offers a range of tests to enable residents to check the quality of their rainwater. Testing is only recommended in instances where there are specific health concerns.

Microbial quality of drinking water is commonly measured by testing for Escherichia coli (E.coli), which is an indicator of faecal contamination and the possible presence of enteric pathogens.

All water samples are required to be collected, taken and transported in a particular manner and advice should be sought prior to taking samples.

A full list of the tests performed by the MidCoast Council Water Services Laboratory can be obtained by contacting MidCoast Water Services laboratory, located at 299 Bootawa Dam Road, Bootawa. They can be contacted by phone on 6591 7566 to discuss dropping off and transportation of samples or to enquire about the costs of analysis. Council is able to provide sample containers.

Information in relation to rainwater tanks and drinking water can be found on NSW Health's website at: <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/water/Pages/rainwater.aspx>