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USING WATER WISELY



Luke Middleton installs a water tank.

Picture: DAVID SMITH/IMP100

Tanks for the solution

By Suvi Mahonen

IT SEEMS to have been a long, wet winter - but surprisingly little improvement has been made to the amount of water in Melbourne's storage system.

Yarra Valley Water said last week that despite the rain, water storages were still only half full and there was a long way to go before the system recovered from the drought.

Stage two restrictions are still in force. And suddenly, rainwater tanks - long banned by councils across the suburbs - are all the rage. They're not only legal, they're encouraged.

Yarra Valley Water spokeswoman Cheryl West said tanks were available at all main hardware stores, or people could buy from a manufacturer by phoning ARI Plastank on 1300 138 265.

Luke Middleton has spent 10 years designing a water tank and recycling system.

"Self-reliance equals freedom," Mr Middleton said.

"We don't need drinking-quality water to flush our toilets or water our gardens.

"A tank allows you to sustain a green garden regardless of how empty the reservoirs are, or how tight the water restrictions. You have the freedom to create, and more importantly control, your own personal reservoir."

Mr Middleton said he established Ecologically

A tank allows you to sustain a green garden regardless of how empty the reservoirs are, or how tight the water restrictions.

- Luke Middleton.

Motivated Environments in 2000 with a group of people eager to explore the potential of ecological and socially sustainable principles.

"I do a lot of outdoor activities such as bike riding, sailing and surfing. I have an awareness and respect for nature and I wanted to reduce my impact on the earth," he said.

The cost of one of his water tanks and a pump was about \$1700, Mr Middleton said. Installation and plumbing would take the total to about \$4000.

"It's taken a long time to convince people, but I think they're coming around to the idea of having a water tank," he said.

"What we're saying is that we believe a household should be measured not by how grand it is, but how smart it is."

DID YOU KNOW

■ THE average Melbourne household uses about 240,000 litres of water a year. This is about 657 litres a day.

■ A dripping tap can waste 22 litres of water a day, or 8300 litres a year.

■ Hot water accounts for about 25 per cent of an average household's energy use in Victoria.

■ The average older-style shower uses 15 to 20 litres of water a minute. If you have two six-minute showers a day you are using 180 litres of water, or 65,700 litres a year.

■ Using a modern AAA shower can save 35,040 litres a year for the same number of showers.

■ The average bath uses about 150 litres of water. If you have one bath a week, this can add up to 7800 litres a year.

Source: Yarra Valley Water

Water
is Life.

Yarra Valley Water manages a water and sewerage system comprising 17,000km of pipelines worth about \$1.4Billion. How we manage this system is crucial to delivering reliable and efficient services that meet your needs and the needs of the environment.

Benchmarking against other Water Utilities

This year, in conjunction with twenty major water utilities from around Australia and overseas, we completed a benchmarking exercise co-ordinated by the Water Services Association of Australia. This involved independent auditors comparing how we operate and maintain the system, how we replace it when it's worn out and how we assess and manage the risks associated with overseeing such an important public asset. In all, we were assessed across seven

functions and over nine hundred different measures.

We are very proud to report that our Management processes and procedures scored very highly across all seven functions and had the highest score of all participating utilities in five of the seven asset management functions.

We are not pretending that we don't have room for improvement. We know for instance that many customers experience inconvenience from burst water mains and blocked sewers and that we need to reduce the leakage in our water supply system. I am confident however that we have good systems in place and that you can trust us to look after these public assets to the best of our ability.

If you are interested in more details on how we manage the water and sewerage

system, we will soon be publishing, on our web site, our 'Water Plan'. This is an important report that we will be providing to the Essential Services Commission to enable it to set our future prices. The final version will be available early in September. Our web site also contains lots of water conservation advice and information on all our services. Visit www.yvw.com.au.


Tony Kelly
Managing Director

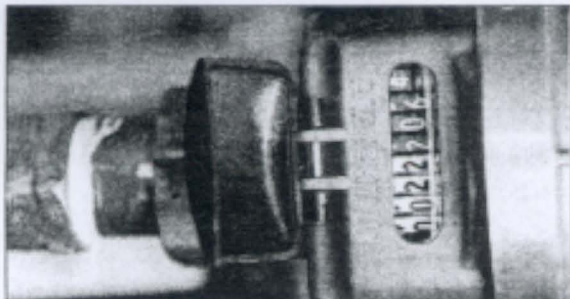
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Yarra Valley
Water

More than a drop in the bucket



Designer Luke Middleton's success is reflected in the water in one of his tanks. Picture: DAVID SMITH, WSPH/10



For the first time, householders can measure the amount they save.

PRAHRAN designer Luke Middleton has managed to integrate 15,000 litre corrugated iron or fibreglass tanks into modern designs suited to inner-city townhouses.

The prototype tank in Prahran, which forms part of a fashion designer's home, is the first with which water savings can be measured.

"So far, the results have been astounding," Mr Middleton, 36, said.

"The tank, which can collect up to 6000 litres of water from the roof in one hour of rain, is reducing overall household water consumption by more than 70 per cent."

The tank water is used to flush the toilet and water the garden. As a result, the house uses just 76,000 litres of mains water a year, as opposed to the average Australian household that uses about 240,000 litres a year.

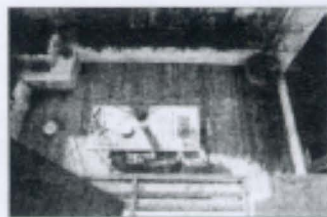
"It has been a battle convincing people that water tanks are a good idea," Mr Middleton said.

Yarra Valley Water spokeswoman Cheryl West agreed that rainwater tanks were important.

"If just 1 per cent of the homes in metropolitan Melbourne installed 2250-litre tanks, over 70 million litres could be saved every year," Ms West said.

"Over 120,000 litres of rainwater run-off goes down the drain each year. Tanks help capture some of this largely wasted resource."

"With many environmental issues, it is sometimes difficult to see how our individual actions make a difference."



"It has been a battle convincing people that water tanks are a good idea."

— Luke Middleton.

"Installing water tanks on our homes is one very clear way we can make a difference."

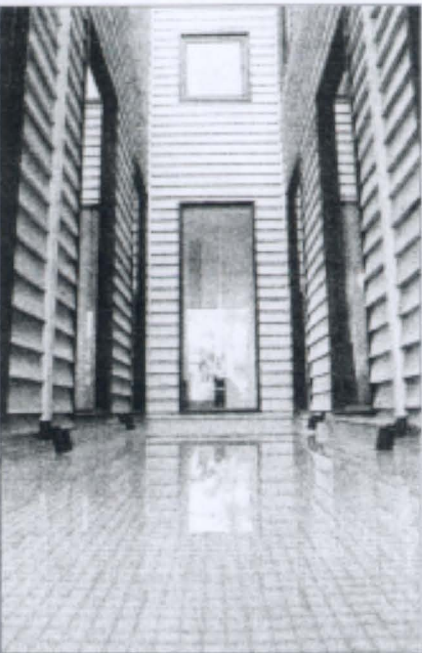
Mr Middleton was awarded a Smart Water Fund grant in 2003 to deliver a recycling system that would capture 60 per cent of rainwater in new Melbourne properties.

"I look at all the water racing down the gutter and I think, if only we could prevent this from happening. More than 90 per cent of rain that falls in urban areas is not collected for re-use. This run-off becomes polluted by catching street rubbish and picking up oil molecules, resulting in polluted rivers and beaches that are no longer fit for swimming."

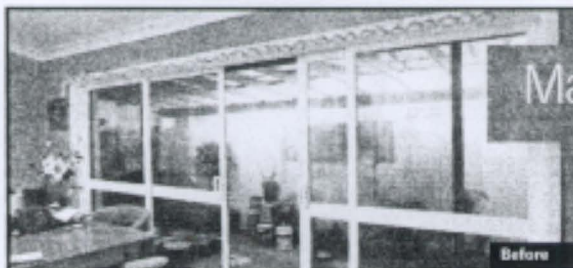
"Hopefully, people will see this as the future. Everyone's talking about the problems, now we just have to start installing the solutions. We can't afford not to."

Smart Water Fund manager Chris Lee said the Prahran project had successfully demonstrated what a big difference a water tank could make in reducing water consumption from the mains system.

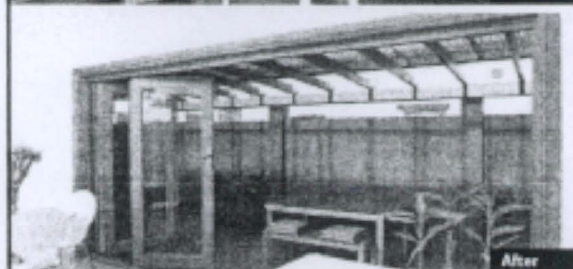
"In our view, the successful integration of water storage and circulation devices to allow reuse within the house represents the way of the future," Mr Lee said.



The water theme continues with a lap pool.



Before



After

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