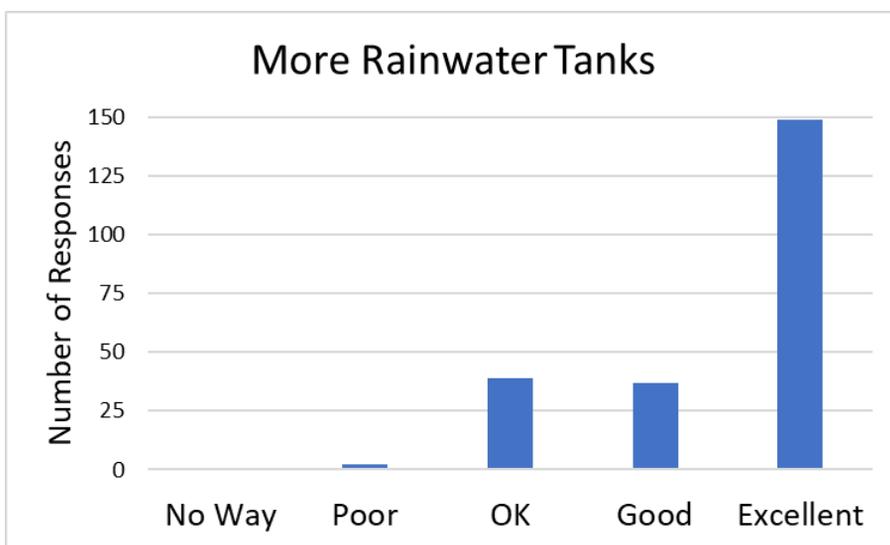


ZNET recently surveyed Uralla Shire residents on nine options for future water security

This is what people said about installing more rainwater tanks to supplement the town water supply



People's comments give an insight into their rating for the option and allow common themes to be identified



Individual comments relating to each theme build a deeper understanding of people's values and opinions

Comment Theme	Type of Comments
Subsidise cost of installing	Need to provide government incentives; rebates would encourage homeowners to install; other Councils have incentive schemes; need to simplify Council requirements; Council restrictions are expensive to meet; remove Council fees for large water tank proposals.
Water independence	Out of towners are independent; we all need to be responsible for our water needs; should not be funded by public money; so sensible; Uralla residents should be keen due to recent arsenic contamination.
Used every day in house	Best if connected to toilets and washing machines; ensure stored water is actually used all the time; tanks catch small rainfall events providing regular water; every little bit of water saving helps; most people save the water for gardens for when restrictions come in.
Regulation to make mandatory	Needs to be in building code; legislation to ensure household use inside; should have enough for garden use; every house should have a tank; no private pools using town water.
Educate on use	Practical use – not just as backup; education needed on continual use; encourages responsible and visible value of water; support installation, benefits and risk of use; with good guidance can be very successful.
Safe to drink	Compulsory maintenance with testing for bacteria; best tank material for water quality; not keen on plastic tanks; treat and filter before kitchen use.
Cost effectiveness	Expensive option to install, tanks deteriorate.
More information	Council regulation, how many can we have; could grey water usage be more beneficial/practical?

Our focus group research provides a rich picture of the *values* that informed people's perspectives

Much like the community responses to the use of groundwater bores, the use of domestic rainwater tanks was also regarded as **familiar** to people. Rainwater tanks were seen as **common** and an accepted and well understood technology. Throughout our discussions there was a degree of disagreement regarding the **current regulations** on the use of rainwater tanks for augmenting domestic drinking supplies. Some participants reported that they have rainwater systems directly plumbed into their domestic supplies while others understood that this was contrary to existing regulations. Many of the participants indicated that they routinely **do not drink** the town water, relying on rainwater or bottled water.

In considering the potential for the increased use of rainwater tanks in Uralla the **cost** of installing new rainwater tanks, particularly as it may be borne by vulnerable and low-income households, was a particular concern. Here discussion highlighted the potential for rebates and incentives to encourage households to adopt and update rainwater systems. In this context a key concern was around the **fairness** and **equity** of encouraging the uptake of rainwater tanks.

At the same time, discussion in our focus groups also questioned both **the long term** viability of domestic rainwater tanks and whether other approaches may prove to be more useful. One participant, for example, commented "all the big shops that you've got around, no water tank. Where's the water going?" What this suggests is that notions of fairness and equity are not simply values associated with the financial cost of installing and maintaining rainwater tanks. Rather our research suggests that the involvement of both **the public and private** sectors - in addition to individual households - will be essential in ensuring that the prioritised use of rainwater tanks is perceived as fair **across all sectors** of the Uralla Shire community.

If rainwater tanks are part of the solution, community concerns would be acknowledged and addressed if Council can communicate on the following key issues:

- ✓ opportunities for Council to provide financial assistance and/or incentives for households to install rainwater tanks
- ✓ Financial assistance to plumb rainwater into homes for washing machines and flushing toilets
- ✓ community education on how to safely store and effectively use rainwater, including how to maintain a rainwater tank
- ✓ information on planning regulations on rainwater tank installation