



Esperance Port Authority

Media Statement

Monday, 7 May 2007

Update on cleaning of rainwater tanks

The Esperance Port Authority has been registering the names and contact details of local residents who want their water tanks cleaned. To date more than 100 residents have registered.

Last week the Port started carrying out inspections of those who had registered to undertake a scope of work for each tank. All of the tanks are different with different connections to gutters, houses etc. Some also have sealed tops.

From tomorrow contractors will start cleaning the roof gutters of residents who have registered to have their tanks cleaned.

From next Monday, 14 May the cleaning of affected water tanks will commence.

The Port has contracted Eden Contractors to carry out the work. They have subcontracted the cleaning out of the tanks to Kalgoorlie based company, Grimefighters, who have the knowledge, experience and correct equipment to handle this work.

The sludge from the bottom of each tank will be removed by Grimefighters, taken away and discharged into large holding tanks approved for the purpose by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC).

Water in the holding tanks will then be tested before any decision is made for disposal of the water and sediment. This will be at the discretion of the DEC and the Department of Health (DOH).

The DOH has given approval for residents with affected tanks, to empty their tanks directly onto their garden or lawn prior to the tank being cleaned. A separate fact sheet with this information is attached.

At this stage the Port envisages that between six and 10 tanks a day will be cleaned. The cleaning of the rainwater tanks will take some time to complete and the Port is committed to developing a process where as many tanks in one area at a time are cleaned.

The Port Authority has written today to all those residents who have registered to have their tank cleaned to keep them informed of the progress of the cleaning

process. The Port will individually contact those residents before a tank inspection is carried out and before the tank is cleaned. Residents will also be kept up-to-date on the process on a weekly basis.

Once tanks are cleaned, residents should allow first rains to clean the roof and guttering before allowing it to enter the rainwater tank. Fitting of a first-flush diverter is strongly encouraged, and will assist in this process.

After cleaning is completed the quality of rainwater in the tanks cannot be guaranteed. The DOH's Urban Rainwater Collection brochure provides advice on the safe collection of rainwater. The DOH will undertake spot checks of tanks to verify the adequacy of cleaning.

The Esperance Port Authority estimates that the cost of cleaning each individual water tank which includes inspection, cleaning of gutters and removal of waste will be about \$1,000.

Residents who haven't yet registered to have their tank inspected by the Port and would like to, should call the Port direct on 1800 880 798.

ENDS

Contact:

Caroline de Mori
Tel: 9485 1254
Mob: 0418 919 064



INFORMATION TO RESIDENTS

Cleaning / Decontamination of Rainwater Tanks

The purpose of this information sheet is to advise residents of arrangements that have been made for the cleaning of rainwater tanks. The cleaning is to be carried out by contractors employed by the Esperance Port Authority at no expense to residents.

The procedures (outlined below) have been agreed to by the Department's of Health, Environment and Conservation, Shire of Esperance, Chemistry Centre of WA, Esperance Port Authority and contractors who will be carrying out the work.

The intention is to ensure that as far as practicable, tanks are rendered clean of heavy metal sediment and tanks can be used to capture rainwater.

Request / Booking Process

- Contact the Esperance Port Authority on 1800 880 798 to arrange for rainwater tank cleaning. Your details will be entered onto a database for the cleaning service to occur. Cleaning will occur on a priority / locality basis however all customers will be contacted prior to the tank being cleaned.

What the resident needs to do

- Drain the tank to within 10-15cm of the bottom, or to outlet (tap) level.
As most heavy metal sediments will have settled to the bottom of the tank the priority is to remove that material and sludge. Whilst there may be elevated levels of lead and nickel in the water, allowing it to discharge onto the ground is not considered to pose any risk to health or contaminate soils.
- Water should be directed to an area of your yard with good soakage such as a sandy area, garden bed or grassed area. If your tap is located at the bottom of the tank, or it is not possible to empty the tank, you should advise the Port Authority or contractor at the time you lodge your request, as this may require removal of the entire tank contents.

Cleaning Process

Once the bulk of water has been removed, the contractor will carry out the following;

- Gutters which supply water to the tank, and the insides of the tank itself will be pressure cleaned using scheme water.
- Water remaining in the tank, including sludge and sediments, will be pumped from the resident's tank into a holding tank fitted to the contractor's vehicle.
- The tank will be given a final rinse with scheme water.
- Waste water from the tanks will be taken away by the contractor and discharged into large holding tanks approved for the purpose by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC).
- Water in the holding tanks will be tested before any decision is made for disposal of the water and sediment. This will be at the discretion of the DEC and the Department of Health (DOH).



Delivering a **Healthy WA**



Ongoing Management / Monitoring

- Residents should allow first rains to clean the roof and guttering before allowing it to enter the rainwater tank. Fitting of a first-flush diverter is strongly encouraged, and will assist in this process.
- The DOH with the cooperation of the Shire will conduct further random tests of rainwater (after cleaning) to verify the adequacy of cleaning.
- It should be noted that the quality of rainwater cannot be guaranteed. Residents should refer to Department of Health's Urban Rainwater Collection brochure for further advice on the safe collection of rainwater. Copies are available at the Shire of Esperance administration building or online at:
[http://www.health.wa.gov.au/envirohealth/water/docs/UrbanRainwater Collection.pdf](http://www.health.wa.gov.au/envirohealth/water/docs/UrbanRainwater%20Collection.pdf)

Further inquiries about the cleaning of rainwater tanks should be directed to the Esperance Port Authority on 1800 880 798.

S:\EHD\Applied\Typing\DOCUM\info to residents Cleaning-decontamination of rainwater tanks.doc

