

Tap into water reductions at home

Earth First

By Peter West, ECCO

Orange's water supply hovers marginally above the 20% level (some of which is unsuitable for drinking), and has been declining steadily all summer, despite intermittent rainfall. This week's rain has done very little to boost dam levels, but has provided a valuable recharge to gardens, local creeks and streams.

Throughout Orange level 5a water restrictions now limit outside water use to hand-held hoses and micro-sprays between the hours of 6pm and 630pm on Sundays only. These conditions were relaxed last week, from the use of buckets only, after complaints and objections. However, unless there are large reductions in water use, or substantial rainfall arrives, Orange's water supply could very soon demand even tighter water restrictions that will be felt across domestic, industry, and commercial sectors.

It could be claimed that Orange's growth and development has occurred at a rate that exceeds its natural resources (in this case water). To address Orange's long-term water needs in a sustainable way, options must include reductions in water use, making better use of currently available water, and re-using water wherever we can.

Rather than more dams and more pipelines to other sources of diminishing water, options should include waste-water re-use and recycling systems, water re-use and harvesting in homes (eg, rainwater tanks), and widespread use of water efficient appliances/technology (eg, showerheads). For those who seek an answer to the question, who can solve our water problem, the answer is YOU!!

Last weeks Earth First article focused on water use in the garden, and how small changes can translate into big savings. Even greater water savings can be made by implementing efficient water use practices in your home. As domestic consumption represents a high proportion of water use in Orange, we need to review everything we do with water at home. Some simple things you can do include:

Your kitchen

- Install a 3-star water efficient tap that uses 50% less water than a normal tap, and save thousands of litres of water and around \$100 each year.
- Use a plug in the sink when you wash fruit and vegetables, or catch water in a bucket to water indoor/outdoor plants.
- Buy a water efficient dishwasher
- Only use the dishwasher when it is full, and select the eco-cycle
- Use water previously used to boil eggs, vegies or pasta to water your pot plants.

Your bathroom and toilet

- Exchange your showerhead at Orange City Council for a free water-efficient showerhead, or arrange for a free supply and fitting service.
- Repair any leaking taps and install 3-star rated water efficient taps.
- Take short showers, and use a shower timer
- Turn the tap off while brushing your teeth and use a plug in the basin when shaving
- Replace your single flush toilet with a 4 star (WELS rated) water efficient dual-flush toilet through the toilet replacement service that use about 67% less water than a normal system.
- Repair any leaking cisterns that waste thousands of litres of water
- Place a plastic PET bottle in your cistern to displace water and decrease flush volume
- Install a cistern weight (available free from Orange City Council) to modify your single flush system.

Your laundry

- Only use grey-water garden safe detergents and bucket rinse water onto gardens
- Buy a 4¹/₂ star washing machine (that uses 63% less water than a normal washing machine) and receive a \$150 rebate from the NSW government.
- Only use your washing machine when you have a full load.
- Buy a front loading washing machine.

Water saving devices

- Rainwater tanks
- Water-efficient shower heads
- Grey-water re-use systems
- Water saving tap-wear and fixtures
- Tank-to toilet systems
- Shower timers
- Water-efficient dishwashers and washing machines

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Current water restrictions in Orange, see www.orange.nsw.gov.au

Water efficient practices and rebates: www.waterwisensw.com.au,

www.savewater.com.au, www.environment.nsw.gov.au/rebates/ and

www.waterforlife.com.au.

Sustainable tip for the week: Fix all your leaking or dripping taps – Every leaking tap can waste 20 000 litres of precious water per year.

Green dates for the calendar:

Community garden working bee – ELF, Orange showground TODAY 9am -1pm

Clean Up Australia Day – March 7 (see www.cleanupaustraliaday.org.au)