



## **MEDIA RELEASE 31 MAY 2019**

### **South Australia's rainwater tank industry claims Treasurer's move to abolish tanks will not reduce new house prices but will cost the community.**

The industry's peak bodies claim a recent announcement by Treasurer Rob Lucas to abolish tanks on new homes is likely to increase costs in the long term to already struggling South Australian families rather than save them money or prop up struggling builders.

Leisa Donlan, CEO of ARMA's Water Tank Group says "Rainwater harvesting is part of a bigger story and has proven an opportunistic bad guy for regulators. A similar change in Queensland failed to move the needle on the economy, new home approvals or housing affordability. The decision actually resulted in years of higher water bills for homeowners. It's simply a sleight of hand movement of cost from builders to homeowners with real and long term consequences for South Australian families."

Speaking on behalf of local industry groups about the comments by the Treasurer, Rob Lucas, John Bithell stated "We understand that the building industry needs support but surely there is a better option than compromising water efficiency and environmental protections. While the building industry does need help, so does the environment and so does local government and their ratepayers. Support for more sustainable homes will also deliver a more sustainable building industry. The additional cost of stormwater infrastructure to cope with new development in Adelaide without point source control like rainwater harvesting is estimated at \$4,800 per lot."

Rainwater management has proven controversial in South Australia and across the country. Policy decisions still fail to encompass the complexity of the system and in attempting to solve one problem, past decisions have often created chaos. Thoughtful policy needs to include working to save water in a very dry city and drought proofing the State, keeping costs for treated water affordable by building smaller desalination plants and improving stormwater quality and helping seagrasses. Rainwater tanks in Adelaide don't only help to reduce water use and keep gardens maintained, they help to reduce the risk and severity of flooding in all the State's cities and towns. Fewer rainwater tanks will mean more costs to local government ratepayers for stormwater management infrastructure.

Mike Thompson, Chairman of the Rainwater Harvesting Committee of Irrigation Australia says "There are better choices for the building industry. Developers like Mirvac and Frasers are leading the whole country in sustainable development, building homes and communities that generate their own energy and water. Rainwater Harvesting provides a local, environmentally friendly water source and is vital for managing stormwater and waterway health. Maybe the government could use its power to support more sustainable building activity in Housing SA or through the Homestart program. The current proposal to remove rainwater harvesting will shift costs from developers onto the environment and local government in return for promised savings not backed by evidence. The building industry does need help, so does the environment and so does local government."

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Leisa Donlan 0414 932 095 or [leisadonlan@rotationalmoulding.com](mailto:leisadonlan@rotationalmoulding.com)

John Bithell 0410 373 522 [john.bithell@maxiplas.com](mailto:john.bithell@maxiplas.com)

Mike Thompson 0408 065 295 [mthompson@claytonengineering.com.au](mailto:mthompson@claytonengineering.com.au)