

WHEN WILL THE DROUGHT BREAK?

When you live on the Blackall Range, it is often difficult to comprehend the severity of the current drought affecting much of Eastern Australia. The famous early forecaster Inigo Jones was always quoted speaking of "the big one" when most of Qld would be devoid of stock. From Longreach to Gunnedah, my rural colleagues are saying this drought is the worst in living memory with both water and feed becoming absolutely critical. This may just be the super drought that Jones predicted back in the 1930's. The mental health of our rural producers is a major concern as they battle years of record rainfall deficiencies and starving and dying livestock.

Although our part of the world here on the Range is one of the more favoured areas in Queensland for rain, below average rainfall has been the case for much of our area this year as well.

With the majority of homes on the Range using water from rainwater tanks, bores and springs, most of us are very conscious of our water consumption. The national household average daily use in Australia is 900 litres per day (approx 200 gallons) including outdoor usage. Many rural towns are facing water restrictions for the first time.

The roof on an average size home (230 m²) will collect approximately 400,000 litres (100,000 gallons) per year based on the average Range rainfall of approximately 1800 mls. One of the best tips for new home builders is to not skimp on rainwater tanks when construction is underway. Our predominately summer rainfall often means overflowing tanks through much of the summer and then a shortage during the drier winter months due to inadequate storage capacity. Recent falls of up to 100mls have replenished tanks and given us much welcome relief however the rain didn't go very far inland.

Tips for improving water usage include dual flush toilets, eliminating leaking taps, front load washing machines, dishwashers with higher water efficiency, efficient shower roses, mulching and watering gardens only when plants require it. Clear instructions for visitors from the city on water conservation are also very helpful. Improved grey water usage systems are increasing in popularity as well.

Let's hope we are tipping full rain gauges out very soon and that our farmers have smiles from ear to ear. In the meantime, be careful with this precious resource. Please consider donations to registered charities such as Rural Aid, Drought Angels and Aussie Helpers. These groups support rural towns people as well as farmers.

Quote from Said Hanrahan

"In God's good time down came the rain; and all the afternoon on iron roof and window-pane it drummed a homely tune." John O'Brien



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