STEEL EDGE

A newsletter of product innovation, corporate information and news for customers of BlueScope Steel Limited

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Conjoint Associate Professor Peter Coombes with his household rainwater tanks.

Small suburban house yields impressive rainwater results

A small inner-Newcastle suburban house is yielding statistics from long-term monitoring that point to enormous potential savings for urban residents electing to harvest rainwater.

What's more, these findings cast serious doubts on prevailing calls for major new reservoirs or desalination plants, especially in Australia's major cities.

The house, complete with a corrugated steel roof and two corrugated steel rainwater tanks made from AQUAPLATE® steel, is owned by Conjoint Associate Professor Peter Coombes at the School of Environmental and Life Sciences, University of Newcastle, and his partner Janine. Dr Coombes' position at the University of Newcastle has recently been funded by Bluescope Steel to continue his long-term research into integrated water cycle management.

These tanks were supplied and installed by Cessnock Tank Works, now a member of the STEEL BY™ Brand Partnership Program.

"Based on my research, water solutions for most Australians living in major cities and coastal regional centres could adequately be augmented by decentralised solutions, including rainwater harvesting systems," Dr Coombes said.

He feels comfortable with his findings, as his house in the inner-city suburb of Carrington has been closely monitored for the past seven years. "No other house in Australia has been as closely monitored for as long when it comes to rainwater harvesting and its effects," he said.

The first myth that was debunked is that you need a large roof area or large tanks to benefit from rainwater harvesting. The roof area of Dr Coombes' house is only 95 square metres, and the tanks can hold 2,200 litres each. These tanks, in turn, have trickle top-up with mains water, ensuring the household never runs out of water.

A small pump has been plumbed in which supplies water for all household uses – including drinking water. The only other concession to water saving is a 4A-rated front-loader washing machine. The couple does not use a dishwasher, which could arguably save even more water.

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CASE STUDY: CARRINGTON HOUSE

Rainwater harvesting and water-efficient appliances have led to a range of household benefits – including **reductions in water** and **energy consumption.**

• Water savings	– 131,000 litres/annum
• Mains water reduction	– 71 per cent/annum
• Electricity reduction	– 19 per cent/annum
• CO_2 emissions reduction	– 1.126 tonnes/annum

Average annual savings:

Water	– $167.00
Electricity	– $146.00
Detergents	– $1029.00
TOTAL	**– $1342.00**

SPECIAL EDITION: HARVESTING THE CLOUDS

Small suburban house yields impressive rainwater results

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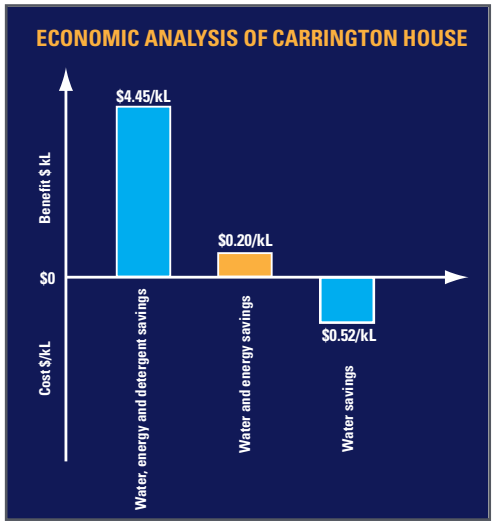
Dr Coombes' personal savings have amounted to more than $9300 over the past seven years, more than offsetting his initial tank, pump and plumbing installation costs of $3280.

He attributes his reduced water consumption, energy requirements and subsequent lower CO_2 emissions to the lower energy used by his pump. "Because the pressure is lower than mains water pressure, we run tank water through our system at the rate of eight to nine litres per minute, compared with some 20 litres of mains water a minute, resulting in reduced water heating costs," Dr Coombes said.

"Decentralised water management strategies have a number of distinct benefits," he said. "First, there's reduced demand for mains water, and availability of local water sources increases with population.

"Second, there's reduced greenhouse gas emissions because of lower energy requirements to process and pump less mains water, providing a buffer against the impact of climate change. Third, there's a marked improvement in regional water security."



Another major benefit would come from reduced stormwater and sewage discharge to the environment.

"However, I believe the benefits most underestimated when looking at rainwater harvesting are the overall reduction in mains water required to service a city, the savings that could be made in sewage and stormwater infrastructure, and the value of these benefits to society and various ecosystems," Dr Coombes said.

With catchment water levels at all-time lows in all capital cities except Adelaide, Australia needed to consider implementing decentralised water-management systems – where as many households as possible use tank water – sooner rather than later, Dr Coombes said.

"Our current centralised dams and reservoir-based systems were developed through last century as one way of drought-proofing our major cities," he said.

Dr Coombes' credentials

Conjoint Associate Professor Peter Coombes is one of Australia's foremost authorities on water management and rainwater harvesting, with more than 20 years' experience in the field.

He holds a PhD in water systems engineering and microbiology, degrees in civil engineering and surveying and is Managing Director of consultancy Urban Water Cycle Solutions.

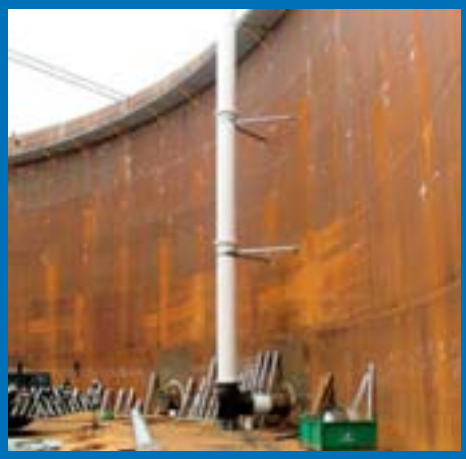
As well as being Conjoint Associate Professor of Integrated Water Cycle management in the School of Environmental and Life Sciences at the University of Newcastle, and the former New South Wales Chair of the Stormwater Industry Association, he is also a:

- Member of the Working Group For Water For Our Cities in the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council
- Member of the Urban Water Advisory Group, advising the National Water Commission
- Research Leader on Innovative Water-Sensitive Urban Design – Intervention Strategies to Counter Deteriorating Infrastructure and Environments, and Evolving Urban Form
- Joint chair of the 13th Annual Rainwater Catchment System and 5th International Water-Sensitive Urban Design Conference.

Dr Coombes' position at the University of Newcastle has recently been funded by Bluescope Steel to continue his long-term research into integrated water cycle management.

Reservoir to supply Sydney's growing western suburbs

A 38-megalitre steel reservoir being built for Sydney Water will provide additional fresh water for one of Sydney's fastest growing areas.



The reservoir, being built by Saunders International at Minchinbury, is due to be commissioned in August 2007.

This latest tank is 58 metres in diameter, and contains more than 715 tonnes of Grade 250 XLERPLATE® steel. It will sit alongside a similar Sydney Water storage facility built in 1975.

Saunders International has already cut construction time by 12 weeks, while implementing improved safety at the work site.

"We optimised Sydney Water's design as part of the contract, and suggested changes that allowed us to fast track the construction process," Saunders International Project Manager Imma Kathir said.

"You can't do that unless you have complete confidence in your workforce, in the quality of the steel you are using and in the delivery performance of your suppliers."

BlueScope Steel made its first deliveries of XLERPLATE® steel for the project to Saunders International's fabrication workshop at Condell Park in western Sydney within four weeks of the initial order being placed.

"We haven't had a single delivery or quality problem with the XLERPLATE® steel supplied by BlueScope Steel," Mr Kathir said. "It has passed our stringent quality control checks, as well as Sydney Water's regular inspections."

Saunders International used automatic welding machines to do most of the horizontal and vertical welding for the Minchinbury reservoir.

The reservoir design includes six strakes which vary from 3000mm in width at the base, to 2240mm at the top. Thicknesses of the XLERPLATE® steel plates reduce, in steps, from 32mm at the bottom of each strake to 8mm at the top of the reservoir.

XLERPLATE® steel has also been specified for the annular (12mm) and island (10mm) floor plates.

Once the new reservoir is up and running, Saunders International will undertake maintenance on Sydney Water's existing unit.

(From left, back row) Andrew Cropp, NSW Regional Business Manager for BlueScope Water, Dr Peter Coombes and school principal Gai O'Neill with Erskineville Public School students.

Rainwater turns inner-Sydney school green

Sydney's Erskineville Public School is collecting and using rainwater to help convert an inner-city 'asphalt jungle' into a sustainable and diverse garden oasis.

Thanks to two large WATERPOINT® rainwater tanks from BlueScope Water, the school is not only well into its Asphalt To Greenbelt program – in which a football field-sized area of the playground has been dug up and replaced with grass – it is saving precious mains water by using rainwater to flush the toilets.

It has also cut its mains water consumption by installing three-second timed spring-return drinking taps throughout the grounds.

According to school principal Gai O'Neill, the two 8200-litre tanks are also helping the school community develop what it calls an 'interactive garden', supporting a range of fruit trees and organically grown vegetables planted and nurtured by students and their families.

Installed a year ago, courtesy of a Federal Government Community Water Grants scheme injection with a financial top-up from the school and broader community, the tanks stand proudly in the playground of the 125-year-old school.

"We didn't want to hide them behind a building or bury them in the ground," Ms O'Neill said. "We wanted students to see them and play around them so they could be constantly reminded of the role these tanks play in supplying their water."

As the school has a heritage-listed front facade, a decision was made to install traditional round corrugated steel tanks manufactured from AQUAPLATE® steel.

"Without our tanks, we would not be able to maintain the trees, gardens or grassed playing area," Ms O'Neill said.

The 220-student school plans to double in size in the next few years. "We will reopen several buildings to accommodate extra students, and we plan on installing another two rainwater tanks to address this expansion," Ms O'Neill said.

Parents and friends of the school have been active from the outset of the Asphalt To Greenbelt program. Apart from helping to secure the grant, more than 160 parents and students were on hand to help install the tanks, and a regular army of volunteers maintains the gardens and grounds.

"Being an active inner-city school community, we have parents who are scientists, agriculturalists, architects and hydrographers, so we have an enormous pool of professional resources to call on," Ms O'Neill said. "We now have other schools throughout Sydney visiting us and studying what we've achieved – and what we plan in coming years."

Part of these plans is a huge community event scheduled for November 2007. Called Erko Berserko, this event – to be held annually – will showcase a range of water-saving and sustainable technologies, and will help market the school's 'home-grown' produce.

Students with fruits of their labour.

"We've already picked our first olives and have them soaking, and we'll also be marketing our citrus fruits – lemons, limes and oranges – as well as tomatoes, and jams made from our own cumquats," Ms O'Neill said.

And what values does the school wish to impart to students through its embrace of rainwater harvesting?

"If each student carries the message of the benefits of installing and using rainwater tanks back into the community, along with overall sustainability and gardening messages, the program will have been an enormous success," Ms O'Neill said. "So far, enthusiasm for what we are achieving shows no signs of abating!"

Steel tanks a flaming success

Recent research conducted by the Bushfire Co-operative Research Centre and the CSIRO shows that different types of rainwater tanks can play an important part in defending homes against bushfire threats.

The study looked at the effects of typical Australian bushfire exposures on residential and commercial water tanks made from both steel and plastic.

According to the Bushfire Co-operative Research Centre, anecdotal evidence already existed to suggest water tanks made from steel offered residential and commercial properties a more reliable water supply for fire-fighting during bushfires than tanks made from combustible materials, such as polyethylene.

CSIRO researcher Justin Leonard said: "The steel water tanks assessed in the study were effective in maintaining a fire-fighting water supply to property owners in bushfire-prone regions of Australia."

Of the different materials tested, spiral-wound steel tanks performed best under all bushfire conditions. As well, all tanks made from steel maintained structural integrity when subjected to a 30-minute flame immersion test, simulating a nearby structural fire.

Steel construction liner tanks also maintained structural integrity during all tests, with the liner able to retain water during and immediately after the fire 'front' – a critical period when it comes to protecting property in a bushfire.

Polyethylene tanks, however, suffered considerable distortion during a simulated bushfire passage. This deformation, occurring during a 30-minute flame exposure test, resulted in the tank splitting and melting down.

When adjacent to combustible material, such as wooden fences and structures or other similar tanks, polyethylene tanks risked total failure.

The report concluded that tanks such as BlueScope Water's WATERPOINT CLASSIC® made from AQUAPLATE® steel (those used for the tests) were most suitable for supplying water during and immediately after a bushfire.

Tank water safe to drink

With more than 3.2 million Australians drinking rainwater collected from roofs and stored in tanks, the practice, by and large, appears safe.

According to Conjoint Associate Professor Peter Coombes at the School of Environmental and Life Sciences, University of Newcastle, these people drink tankwater without widespread adverse health effects. Dr Coombes' position at the University of Newcastle has recently been funded by Bluescope Steel to continue his long-term research into integrated water cycle management.

"In fact, it wasn't until centralised water infrastructure was developed last century that streams and tanks ceased being the main source of drinking and household water throughout Australia," Dr Coombes said.

"The dominant source of human water-borne illness is from contamination of drinking water with untreated sewage – and that principle was first established by renowned British scientist John Snow in London in the 1850s."

However, as less than five per cent of domestic water is used for drinking or cooking, Dr Coombes said households can still gain significant benefits from using rainwater harvesting to supply the remainder of household uses.

For those wanting to drink tankwater, the news is positive. The processes of flocculation, settlement and biofilms in tanks act to improve the quality of rainwater, he said. In combination with a correctly installed and operated rainwater tank, these factors minimise the risks associated with drinking rainwater.

Dr Peter Coombes drinks rainwater.

"Modern analysis using DNA, fecal sterols and antibiotics shows that significant fecal contamination of roof-collected rainwater is unlikely for a correctly installed rainwater tank," Dr Coombes said. "Coliform indicators are misleading when comparing roof-collected rainwater to drinking water guidelines."

He said rainwater used in hot-water systems has also been found to comply with drinking water guidelines, thanks to microbial heat death and shock phenomena.

AQUAPLATE® steel, used in making most steel rainwater tanks in Australia – including those supplied by BlueScope Water – has a food-grade polymer lining.

AQUAPLATE® steel comes with a 20-year product warranty.

BlueScope Steel to slash fresh water usage at Western Port plant

A landmark project with South East Water will see BlueScope Steel's Western Port plant cut fresh water use by more than 60 per cent or 660 megalitres a year – equivalent to the annual water consumption of about 3000 Victorian homes.

Western Port plant.

BlueScope Steel has welcomed the Victorian Government's recent Budget announcement that it would provide $4.1 million towards a major water-recycling project to supply the Western Port plant at Hastings.

The total project cost is expected to cost about $21 million, with BlueScope Steel contributing $8 million and South East Water $9.4 million.

Subject to receiving appropriate statutory approvals, the Western Port project will see the partial upgrade of the Somers Treatment Plant and the installation of a new 13-kilometre pipeline to take recycled water to BlueScope Steel's plant for use in manufacturing operations.

As well as reducing fresh water usage, the project will also reduce fresh water discharges to Western Port and the South Eastern Outfall, as well as waste to landfill.

"We congratulate the Victorian Government on its leadership in supporting industry's and BlueScope Steel's drive to save water and improve the environment," BlueScope Steel's Managing Director and CEO Kirby Adams said.

"This project will provide significant environmental benefits, as well as major economic benefits for Victoria in securing production, exports and employment at our Western Port plant."

BlueScope Steel will release further details on the project as they come to hand.

BlueScope Water rises to tank demand in Victoria

BlueScope Water is positioning itself to meet exponentially rising demand for rainwater tanks and rainwater harvesting systems in Victoria.

The company's Victorian and Tasmanian Regional Manager Darren Howse said that while 70 to 80 per cent of all residential properties in the state could be fitted with rainwater tanks or harvesting systems, fewer than five per cent currently were.

"However, our research shows that a significant percentage of Victorian homeowners want to drought-proof themselves by installing rainwater tanks, so there's enormous potential demand," Mr Howse said.

At present, the company's Melbourne manufacturing facility is producing tanks of various shapes with capacities ranging from 2000 to 8800 litres.

To meet the challenges of increasing market demand, production capacity is currently being increased to enable BlueScope Water to continue to be a market leader over the next 12 months and into the future.

Darren Howse with a WATERPOINT CLASSIC® tank.

These tanks include BlueScope Water's WATERPOINT SLIMLINE® and WATERPOINT CLASSIC® tanks, the THINKTANK® system (which includes a WATERPOINT tank, first-flush diversions, water filters, mains water back-up and pressure pump to the household plumbing) and the WATERPOINT INGROUND® system for newer residential developments.

The company is now supplying WATERPOINT ULTRASLIM® tanks, which are 550mm wide and manufactured to various lengths, with capacities up to 2000 litres.

All BlueScope Water steel tanks are manufactured from AQUAPLATE® steel and supported by a 20-year product warranty.

"We have our own dedicated contract installers, as well as a full-time plumber who trains these installers and keeps them abreast of current developments in rainwater tanks and rainwater harvesting systems," Mr Howse said.

"With Victoria's main reservoir capacity currently hovering around 17 per cent, the community is acutely aware of the need to capture rainwater for a range of domestic and community uses."

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BlueScope Steel launches Tank A Day schools' challenge

Taking a lead role in water conservation and recycling, BlueScope Steel has launched a program aimed at providing steel rainwater tanks to primary schools throughout Australia.

Valued at more than $1 million, the *Tank A Day Challenge* will see BlueScope Steel provide 200 Pioneer GALAXY® 27,000 litre rainwater tanks to qualifying schools – one every school day for the coming year.

The Challenge, launched at Erskineville Primary School in Sydney on 16 May, is designed to teach young Australians about the water cycle and the importance of rainwater harvesting, conservation and management.

To qualify, school principals will need to register on the program's dedicated website – www.tankaday.com.au – outlining how their school would benefit from having a tank installed. They must also demonstrate student involvement by having them participate in an educational Challenge water-saving quiz.

The site contains educational materials, a quiz, games and other information for teachers, students, parents and community members.

Successful schools must also have a site adjacent to a school building (with functioning guttering) to accommodate the tank. BlueScope Steel will deliver and install the tanks, and offer advice to schools on the best use of the tanks.

"The *Tank A Day Challenge* aims to improve water-saving practices within primary schools, and give young people more opportunities to learn how they can improve and protect their school facilities," BlueScope Steel's Managing Director and CEO Kirby Adams said.

"BlueScope Steel aims to empower the next generation, showing them they can help Australia better manage its precious water resources."

Schools receiving tanks will be able to minimise stormwater run-off, take pressure off the mains water system, and use rainwater for watering gardens and vegetable patches, and for cleaning. The tanks will also help reduce schools' water bills.

The allocation of tanks will be made weekly, based on three criteria:

- the percentage of students completing the quiz
- the school's written submission on how it will benefit from having a tank
- whether the school has a six metre by six metre levelled site with working downpipes to which the tank can be connected.

Tanks booming for enterprising country company

A rural Queensland rainwater tank company has celebrated an impressive milestone of $1 million in sales in one month, with an order book running well into 2008.

Based in the 4500-strong town of Nanango two-and-a-half hours' drive north-west of Brisbane, Nanango Tank Makers manufactures 100 steel tanks a week using 15 tonnes of AQUAPLATE® steel.

"We reached our first million dollar sales month last December!" owner Neil Wratten said.

Tanks made from AQUAPLATE® steel account for two thirds of Nanango Tank Makers' sales, with the balance coming from the huge corrugated steel Rhino modular tanks (designed for rural applications) and other tanks it distributes.

Demand for the company's tanks was so great that the number of employees had increased seven-fold, Mr Wratten said.

"We've grown to 20 employees since starting Nanango Tank Makers in 1998, at a time when we couldn't even buy rainwater tanks in town.

"Sales have grown dramatically in the last three years because of water shortages, and we now have a network of resellers extending south to Byron Bay (in northern New South Wales), north to Mackay and west to Goondiwindi."

Nanango Tank Makers also regularly receives calls from as far afield as Sydney and Darwin.

The company's slim and round tanks made from AQUAPLATE® steel are popular in city and town areas.

Neil Wratten from Nanango Tank Makers.

"We manufacture slim steel tanks in two sizes only – 3000-litre and 5000-litre capacities – to streamline our production line," Mr Wratten said.

Nanango Tank Makers runs two production lines – one for its slim tanks, the other for round tanks – at its 600-square-metre factory, and boosted output 40 per cent in May when it doubled the size of the factory.

"We have a computerised building process which uses a machine to curve the steel exactly the same way every time, allowing the walls to fit together perfectly," Mr Wratten said.

"We also use automotive gear from the US to attach the tops and bottoms on the tanks, a fine-tuning process that's unique to us because of my previous work in the automotive brake and exhaust industry."

Mr Wratten said he had never needed to mention the $1000 rainwater tank rebate in Queensland because his company's tanks have been selling themselves.

"AQUAPLATE® steel is the most under-rated product in Australia," he said. "It's so durable, tanks last for years."

Designed specifically for use in water tanks, AQUAPLATE® steel is coated with a food-grade polymer for clean- tasting water, and has fire, UV and corrosion-resistant qualities that make it ideal for both urban and rural environments.

Mr Wratten said his company, a member of the STEEL BY™ Brand Partnership Program, was proud of the quality of workmanship on its AQUAPLATE® steel tanks.

The program also allows Nanango Tank Makers to align itself with the quality reputation associated with Australia's leading steel manufacturer.

For more information contact:
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Slimline helps quench Queensland's thirst

With Level 5 water restrictions now in place in South-East Queensland, demand for rainwater tanks has increased five-fold in recent months, according to Slimline Rainwater Tanks.

Owners Ian Carruthers and Lesley Wilson, farmers for 20 years before buying Caloundra-based Slimline Rainwater Tanks four years ago, said demand for the company's tanks had been so great they have already moved their factory twice to bigger premises.

"When Level 4 water restrictions were imposed on South-East Queensland homes and businesses in November 2006, our sale of 3000-litre tanks increased," Ms Wilson said. "Since January, demand for our 5000-litre slim tanks has sky-rocketed after large tanks became compulsory in all new homes."

Slimline Rainwater Tanks sells about 140 tanks a month, with capacities ranging from 550 litres to 5400 litres.

"We now have 10 tank-makers working in a 1000-square-metre workshop equipped with two curving rollers and two riveters," Ms Wilson said. "Our tanks are popular with builders and homeowners because they look great and are ideal for small blocks."

Leslie Wilson and Ian Carruthers.

She said a major advantage of slim tanks was that they allowed a large amount of water to be stored on small housing blocks. Because of the popularity of its 5000-litre tanks, the company has developed three different models catering for varying height restrictions.

"We have a 5000-litre tank that's less than one metre wide!" Ms Wilson said.

She said Slimline Rainwater Tanks' units, which cost $610 to $3050, were also eligible for the Queensland government's $1000 tank rebate.

All of the company's tanks are made from AQUAPLATE® steel, which is easy to maintain, corrosion-resistant, and coated with a food-grade polymer for clean-tasting water.

The tanks, available in a galvanised finish or in one of two prepainted COLORBOND® steel colours – Pale Eucalypt® or Paperbark® – carry a 20-year BlueScope Steel product warranty.

"AQUAPLATE® steel is delivered pre-cut, and we then curve it to set patterns, add a double-sided AQUAPLATE® steel base, stainless steel rods, a lid, and fixtures," Ms Wilson said.

"These stainless steel rods are vital because they maintain the integrity of a tank's structure, stopping it from bulging under the pressure of the water."

When filled with water, a 5000-litre tank weighs slightly more than five tonnes.

"As there's a lot more pressure in tall tanks, we drill about 40 support rods across the width of a tank two metres high, then secure them in place with stainless steel nuts."

Slimline Rainwater Tanks tests all tanks for watertightness before they leave the factory.

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Cessnock Tank Works shapes future

A rural New South Wales rainwater tank company is attributing sales growth of 40 per cent since August 2006 to tougher water restrictions.

Michelle and Tony Kounnas produce a variety of tanks.

Cessnock Tank Works, a home-based company at Elrington in New South Wales' Hunter Valley, employs five people and manufactures 60 round and slim tanks a month from AQUAPLATE® steel.

Owners Tony and Michelle Kounnas, who bought Cessnock Tank Works more than four years ago, said recent demand had been very strong.

"People have finally realised there's a water problem because of the increased media coverage the shortage has received in the last year," Mrs Kounnas said.

"Winter is traditionally a slow time for tank sales, but last winter was busy and we expect the 2007 winter will be too."

Mrs Kounnas said slim tanks (380 to 5000 litres) were the company's fastest growing product line because they looked good and suited smaller suburban blocks.

"We expanded into slim tanks three years ago because we saw space-efficient tanks as being the way of the future," she said. "Sales of our slim tanks have gone from five per cent to 50 per cent of our business in just three years."

Round tanks (100 to 28,000 litres) account for the balance of Cessnock Tank Works' business.

"We've installed four 13,640-litre round tanks at RAAF Williamstown," Mr Kounnas said. "The tanks are made from AQUAPLATE® steel in a galvanised finish to match the look of the surrounding buildings."

The company has also become a supplier of Highline's range of industrial-sized water tanks, with capacities of 23,000 to 2.5 million litres.

"Since introducing large tanks to the business in late 2006, we've been selling about three a month," Mrs Kounnas said.

Cessnock Tank Works advertises in the local newspaper, the Yellow Pages, and on the internet.

"Our website generates about 10 inquiries a week, but a third of our sales come from return customers," Mrs Kounnas said.

"We've established a reputation for manufacturing quality tanks, and providing friendly, helpful service.

"Tony and I remain in contact with every customer, and always ensure our tanks are delivered without scratches or dents."

Cessnock Tank Works joined the STEEL BY™ Brand Partnership Program to associate its steel tanks with the quality and reputation of the BlueScope Steel brand.

"The STEEL BY™ signs and logos give customers peace of mind because they can see they're investing in a reliable, Australian-made product," Mrs Kounnas said.

For more information contact:
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Tanks and silos reduce rural cash flow risk

A Brisbane-based silo manufacturer has recently acquired a New South Wales rainwater tank company to ensure continued growth during times of drought.

Lyndon Amos makes 500 tanks a year.

Grain silo manufacturer MPH Rural purchased Amos Water Tanks in July 2006 because of MPH Rural's country customer base, growing demand for water tanks and similarities between the tank and silo manufacturing processes.

Cowra-based Amos Water Tanks, established 13 years ago by Lyndon Amos, manufactures approximately 500 rainwater tanks a year from AQUAPLATE® steel with capacities ranging from 500 litres to 67,500 litres. More than 90 per cent of the water tanks are sold within a 200-kilometre radius of Cowra.

"Rainwater tanks and silos have great synergies, as they both involve the storage of a bulk commodity and require steel fabrication and delivery," MPH Rural Director Michael O'Connor said.

"Both products appeal to the same rural and farming customers. Selling tanks and silos in conjunction with each other will also allow us to further drought-proof our company.

"Traditionally, water tank sales increase while silo sales fall during times of drought, but the decision to sell tanks and silos will provide us with steady, balanced sales growth into the future."

Mr O'Connor said water tank sales now accounted for 10 per cent of MPH Rural's revenue, but he was expecting rapid growth.

"In three years, we estimate 40 to 50 per cent of MPH Rural's turnover will come from the sale of water tanks," he said.

"Amos Water Tanks is one of only a few tank manufacturers in Australia that manufactures tanks from AQUAPLATE® steel in 45,000-litre and 67,500-litre capacities.

"Round and slim tanks with capacities up to 23,000 litres are fully transportable, but tanks greater than 23,000 litres are built onsite."

MPH Rural also operates a water tank manufacturing facility at Pittsworth in South-East Queensland to supply tanks to the Brisbane market. It plans to expand Amos Water Tanks and sell its products to wholesalers in Sydney, and country and metropolitan Victoria.

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Pioneer Water Tanks primed for export success

Pioneer Water Tanks is undertaking a multi-million dollar capacity expansion project to support significant growth in export sales in the next 12 months.

Pioneer GALAXY® tanks are ideal for commercial and industrial uses.

The company, acquired by BlueScope Water in 2005, provides commercial and community water supply solutions to 50 countries and has agents and distributors in 15 countries.

"We recently opened an office in Texas because there are significant water shortages in some parts of the US," Pioneer Water Tanks General Manager Daniel Wyatt said. "We have also just received US Standard certification, allowing us broader entry into that country's market."

Pioneer Water Tanks, which invests in engineering and product development, has designed and manufactured seismic tanks for the earthquake-prone West Coast of the US.

"The tanks are designed with stronger wall panels and roofs, and have additional 'slosh' capacity, allowing them to handle internal waves when they're shaken during an earthquake," Mr Wyatt said.

He said Pioneer Water Tanks' top three export markets were the US, South Africa and the Middle East, and the company had identified a growing need for humanitarian and commercial water solutions in other countries.

"We manufactured more than 50 water tanks for Sudan when the civil war ended in 2005 to help prevent disease spreading through contaminated water supply," Mr Wyatt said.

Humanitarian clients include Oxfam, the United Nations, Rotary and the International Rescue Committee (IRC).

"Our tanks are ideal for remote locations because of their modular design," Mr Wyatt said. "They comprise 1.2 metre by 2.1 metre modules that can be flat-packed onto a pallet and transported in shipping containers, on trucks or by helicopter."

Pioneer Water Tanks manufactures steel tanks with capacities ranging from 12,000 litres to 2.6 million litres.

Tank walls and roofs are made from COLORBOND® steel and ZINCALUME® steel, and all tanks are lined with a five-layer AQUALINER® membrane.

Pioneer Water Tanks, based in the Perth suburb of Bellevue, has manufactured tanks for Australian rural and commercial markets since 1988.

"We sell tanks to rural customers that are used for water storage on farms, fire fighting supplies, supplying water to schools, and irrigating bowling greens and other sporting surfaces," Mr Wyatt said.

Pioneer Water Tanks is a member of the STEEL BY™ Brand Partnership Program.

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BLUESCOPE STEEL

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Round-the-clock service from Superior Water Tanks

A South-East Queensland rainwater tank company is manufacturing tanks 17 hours a day, six days a week, to meet demand for rainwater tanks.

General manager Sue Evans.

Superior Water Tanks runs tank production lines in two shifts from 5:30am-10:30pm Monday to Saturday.

"We haven't needed to advertise for the past 12 months because demand is so high," General Manager Sue Evans said. "Our website alone generates sufficient leads each week to maintain enough forward inquiry.

"We received 850 online queries a week when interest peaked in August 2006."

Managing Director John Kean bought the Jimboomba-based company six years ago, growing it from four to 40 employees, including 11 women.

"Women play a key role in our company and are employed in all aspects of the business, from organisational management, office administration and sales to supervision of the factory floor," Mr Kean said.

Ms Evans said the company's rainwater tank sales had doubled in the last year, and expects the boom to continue at least for the next three years.

"Only two to three per cent of Australian homes have installed rainwater tanks, so the potential market is huge," she said.

Tanks made from AQUAPLATE® steel account for 80 per cent of Superior Water Tanks' sales.

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