



**Call Us: 1300 MR WASHER  
1300 679 274**

---

## **Stormwater Detention Systems in Strata Developments**

Most developments built in the last 25 years have an On Site Stormwater Detention system, yet the operation of these systems is a mystery to most people.

Councils have requirements that must be met to ensure their drains are not overloaded. Developers submit to Council a stormwater management plan explaining how the stormwater from the site will discharge to the Councils stormwater drains.

Generally, if more than 35% of a site is covered by impervious areas (e.g. roofs or paths) the Council requires a reduced flow of stormwater to drain from the site. This means that rainwater must be temporarily detained in an “On Site Detention System” (usually large tank/s or landscaped “basins” built into the site).

Normally before the Council will issue the Completion Certificate, the developer must create a “Positive Covenant for On Site Stormwater Detention” on the title. This Covenant states the Owners agree to regularly maintain the system.

The Owners Corporation may not be aware of this Covenant or that a Detention System exists and if not maintained the detention system may fail causing flooding.

These systems may be hidden within the structure and may be difficult or dangerous to access for cleaning. Occupation Health & Safety training & Confined Space equipment is vital.

For example we located a concrete detention tank built into a car park ceiling. The tank was 450mm deep & covered over 150 square metres! To safely clean out a tank like this is a very difficult and expensive operation!

Sometimes instead of a tank, a landscaped area will be set aside as a ‘detention basin’. These areas are designed to fill up with water (read “flood”) during heavy rainfall. There should be signs warning that the area is a “Stormwater Detention Basin” and may flood during rainfall.

On Site Detention systems can be high maintenance. Examples are:

- When a detention basin floods, garden debris ends up blocking the pits and outlet filter.
- A tanker truck maybe required to pump out the accumulated sludge from the tanks which has to be disposed of to EPA requirements.
- There maybe stormwater pumps that require regular cleaning and testing.

*As an aside, we are often asked if it is possible to utilize the storage capabilities of an On Site Detention tank to store rainwater for use on the common property gardens.*

*The simple answer is NO; because these systems are designed to hold water temporarily during peak stormwater flow. To make them permanently hold water (like a rainwater tank) would compromise the operation of the stormwater system and cause flooding on the site.*

In summary, regular maintenance of On Site Detention systems is important to ensure the property is kept in good condition and that the legal obligations of the Owners Corporation are met.

*By Tim Cook, Director, Mr Washer Plumbing Services*