

Ping pong ball delivers clean rainwater

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A filtering system that cleans pollutants out of rainwater using a ping-pong ball – invented in Melbourne.

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SafeRain

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“SafeRain is an inexpensive filtration system for rainwater tanks that dramatically improves the water quality and reduces cleaning costs,” says Fresh Innovator Trent Church.

“When it rains, everything on your roof gets flushed down into the rainwater tank. That means all sorts of pollutants including leaves, bird droppings, chimney soot and dirt,” says Trent. “These pollutants collect at the bottom of the tank as sediment, decompose and require regular tank cleaning which is costly.”

“My innovation, SafeRain stops this occurring.”

SafeRain is a water diverter that fits onto rainwater tanks and acts as an automatic valve between the roof and the tank. Inside is a sophisticated filtration system – a ping-pong ball and elastic band.

When rain first starts to flow off the roof and into the pipe, it enters the ping-pong ball through a few holes in its surface. The ball is connected to an elastic band that begins to stretch as the ball fills with water. The filled ball blocks off the intake pipe, operating a valve that allows the debris to be dumped outside the tank. The valve then switches back, allowing clean water to enter the tank.

It operates and resets automatically and is easy to install, requiring no special tools. It is also made from standard plastic plumbing components meaning it is cheap to manufacture.

Trent has a patent on his design and has sold over 2,000 units already mainly in Australia but also to the US, New Zealand, Ireland, PNG and even Bermuda. He has been manufacturing SafeRain filters in his garage for ten years and is now looking for capital to manufacture them on a larger scale.

Trent’s work has already won him a place at Fresh Innovators – a national initiative to bring the work of 16 early career innovators to public attention. Following training in Sydney in May, the sixteen are talking to the media, schools and business about their ideas. One of the 16 will win a study tour to the UK courtesy of the British Council Australia.

“Safe Rain is a fantastic idea,” says Rod Granat, Innovation Manager at the Triton Foundation, an organisation that assists inventors in commercialising their ideas. “There are already a number of devices that attempt to minimise the collection of contaminated water from the first fall of rain. What’s special about Trent’s invention is that it discards the dirty first flow based not on a measured volume but on the rate of the downpour. So the system won’t be fooled by a slow drizzle that doesn’t flush all the dirt from the roof.”

“It is a great design that is so simple but works so well.”

About the Inventor

Trent Church is an independent inventor whose innovation, SafeRain has been carefully examined by the Triton Foundation for commercial potential. The Triton Foundation is a national, not-for-profit organisation founded by George Lewin, inventor of the Australian icon - the Triton Work Bench. They assist inventors in commercialising their ideas and are supported by the Victorian and Queensland Governments.

Photos: High resolution photos and background information available at www.freshinnovators.org
Prototype available for viewing.

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SafeRain is a registered trademark.