

Media release



FROM THE MINISTER FOR WATER

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REDUCING SALT A PRIORITY TO HELP INCREASE WATER RECYCLING

Water Minister John Thwaites today announced a new strategy to make water recycling easier in Melbourne by reducing salt content in wastewater.

Speaking at Carlton and United Beverages in Abbotsford, Mr Thwaites said the plan would help the manufacturing industry and householders reduce the amount of salt in wastewater – making it easier to recycle for agriculture and other uses.

“High salt content is one of the biggest challenges we face in recycling water – industry and consumers can help meet this challenge and ultimately save Melbourne’s drinking water,” Mr Thwaites said.

“For example, the high salt content of wastewater at the Western Treatment Plant at Werribee reduces the opportunities to reuse the water, especially in agriculture and urban developments.

“High salt content can have negative affects on soil, plants and infrastructure – and means wastewater must often undergo more treatment before it can be used.

“The Bracks Government’s *Our Water Our Future* action plan identifies the need to reduce the amount of salt which flows into the Western Treatment Plant as an important part of our goal of recycling 20 per cent of Melbourne’s wastewater by 2010.

“Many manufacturers produce salt as a by-product of their operations or use sodium chloride in their processes.

“Salt is also an ingredient of detergents and soaps used by industry and households. City West Water is helping industry develop cleaner production processes to reduce salinity at its source.

“The Government is also working with the Water Services Association of Australia to investigate options to reduce salt content in detergents.

“We are also investigating better labeling of products so consumers can choose low salt options.”

Mr Thwaites said City West Water had identified the highest salt dischargers among its

customers and was developing opportunities to reduce salt levels and water consumption, and increase recycling.

As part of the strategy, \$1 million in Bracks Government funding is available for projects that will contribute to industry salt reduction.

City West Water is working with CUB, one of the recipients of the funding, on three projects designed to conserve drinking water and reduce the amount of salt that is used in the cleaning of systems to produce beer and other beverages.

Already CUB has reduced salt levels in trade waste by one quarter in the last 12 months.

CUB, General Manager Supply Chain Operations, Stephen Exinger said CUB was continually improving its processes to minimise the environmental impact.

“We have reduced sodium in our trade waste by 25 per cent in the last 12 months – around 116 tonnes, by converting cleaning systems, reusing sodium-based materials and other initiatives. We have also saved 200 million litres of water over this period,” Mr Exinger said.

Other recipients of the funding include:

- Peerless: membrane bioreactor trial
- Qenos: heat exchanger
- Sugar Australia: calcium phosphate recovery project.

Mr Thwaites said an on-site desalination at the Western Treatment Plant is another option being investigated.

“An economic, social and environmental assessment of building a desalination plant at the Western Treatment Plant is under way,” he said.

“By undertaking this range of activities we aim to reduce the salinity of recycled water from the Western Treatment Plant by more than 40 per cent by 2009.

“The Werribee Irrigation District Recycled Water Scheme - the biggest Class A recycled water scheme in Victoria – currently has to blend recycled water with river water to manage salinity levels.

“The salt reduction strategy will reduce the salinity to sustainable levels so that in the future blending is no longer required.”

The salt reduction strategy was developed by water authorities Melbourne Water and City West Water, and was launched at the Carlton and United Beverages (CUB) brewery and beverage plant in Abbotsford.
