

MEDIA RELEASE

17 October 2008

Drinking recycled water – is it an option?

Should Ballarat be the first Victorian city to add recycled water to its potable water supply?

This is one of several questions facing Committee for Ballarat's Water Task Team which has undertaken to help deliver a sustainable, long-term water supply for Ballarat.

Water Task Team chair Tony Chew said as city leaders, Committee for Ballarat members had taken on the responsibility of pursuing all options in securing a sustainable water supply – including the use of recycled water in the potable supply.

"The Goldfields Superpipe has been delivering water to Ballarat for the past five months and its early commissioning meant Ballarat averted a water-supply crisis. However, another dry start to spring means Ballarat's reserves have actually increased very little thus ensuring a continuation of harsh water restrictions. It is obvious additional solutions to Ballarat's water woes must be found before the community's goodwill runs out," Mr Chew said.

"Based on our members' feedback and comments and suggestions from the community, we are now looking at all of the options."

These include using recycled water in the potable supply, finding innovative ways to capture rainwater, reusing existing supplies and setting up a statewide water grid. Mr Chew said the water grid would not simply take water from the rivers to the cities but could transfer water across Victoria from regions where supply is plentiful to regions where it is low.

"The addition of recycled water to potable supplies is a critical element of a sustainable water supply in a dry country, but it is not on the State Government agenda," Mr Chew said. "Therefore it is up to us as community leaders to initiate that discussion."

"We must ensure up-to-date, factual information is available so people can have an informed discussion."

Mr Chew said until the possibility of adding recycled water to the potable supply had been properly debated it could not be dismissed as an option. Recycled water is used to top up drinking water supplies in London, Singapore and the United States and is scheduled to be added to Brisbane's water supply in February next year.

Mr Chew, a resident of Ballarat for almost 30 years, said it was important to consider all water supply options that would support the population, business and industry growth necessary for the city to become a sustainable regional centre.

As newly-appointed chair of the Water Task Team, Mr Chew is drawing together a group of committed, highly qualified and experienced people to drive the 'sustainable water' debate.

Mr Chew's experience in research and development, marketing and international and corporate affairs during 25 years at Mars Confectionery, his commitment to Ballarat and involvement with the Water Task Team since its inception, mean that he and the team are well-placed to find an answer to the city's sustainable water future.

"Initially our team worked with Central Highlands Water to deal with the water supply crisis by completing the Goldfields Superpipe. Now we are committed to finding long-term solutions that will enable us to embrace the growth and development vital to our future."

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