

## ■ from little things big things grow

The Sunbury Melton recycled water pipeline is so far Victoria's biggest venture into the exciting new world of recycled water projects, and there's plenty more on the way.

Minister of Environment and Conservation, Sherryl Garbutt MP, said the State Government was poised to further develop its recycled water strategy, with the introduction of many more recycled water schemes throughout Victoria.

"The Sunbury Melton recycled water pipeline will open up many exciting urban and rural development opportunities on Melbourne's north west frontier, and will be key to the restoration of the region after many years of being largely unproductive rural holdings," Ms Garbutt said.

■ **Western Water's Recycled Water Business Manager Les McLean and Sherryl Garbutt MP take a closer look at the recycled water pipes**

Clad in the nationally recognised colour of recycled water infrastructure, a maze of lilac pipes and branch lines now connect Western Water's Wastewater Purification Plant in Sunbury, to vineyards, olive groves and other farm ventures along the route to the Melton golf course.

Recycled water will also supply designated Green Wedge programs outside Melbourne's metropolitan area, as well as the Hume and Melton Councils, who plan to use recycled water to keep parks and recreation grounds green and growing despite the drought.



## ■ Western Water puts recycling on the map

Western Water is working with the State of Water Unit within the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, to apply its community development expertise to the massive Werribee Plains recycled water project.

Western Water Chief Executive John Wilkinson said the philosophy that had guided Western Water on the Sunbury Melton recycled water pipeline was that there is no such thing as "waste" water, especially in Australia.

"From this starting point, Western Water commenced consultation with the Sunbury and Melton communities to develop local solutions for using recycled water that stacked up philosophically as well as environmentally, socially and economically," Mr Wilkinson said.

"What's more, we developed local solutions to tackle our big-picture concerns, like the ongoing drought and the potential for long term climate change.

"By offering people education about how to use and manage this new resource, and by developing realistic and affordable projects that benefit local economies and improve local environments, there will be an ever growing demand for recycled water," Mr Wilkinson said.

He said Western Water was very keen to source additional recycled water supplies from new housing developments along Melbourne's fast-growing north west corridors.

"Western Water is keen to work with Melbourne Water and the State of Waste Unit to progress our waste-wise philosophy that it is better to pipe recycled residential water inland before it gets mixed with heavy industry waste from the manufacturing areas and becomes more expensive to treat and then recycle," Mr Wilkinson said.



## ■ one story behind a pipeline

FOUR years ago, Rockbank vigneron Matt Ramunno began trucking recycled water from Sunbury to his Melton highway vineyard in a desperate bid to keep his plantings alive during the drought.

As the drought continued, Matt kept on trucking – right up until summer this year.

For the past three years, Matt, his wife Gaye, and their neighbours along the pipeline route, have gathered round the tables at Witchmount Winery, to go over costings and prepare business and environmental managements plans in order to be ready for a new source of water for their land.

Western Water, in conjunction with project partners Melton and Hume Councils helped landowners source independent agricultural expertise as well as financial and agribusiness advice.

Western Water's Les McLean, Business Manager Recycled Water, said the recycled water project had involved extensive community consultation and education programs.

“Once people realise that the quality of recycled water we produce here is better than drinking water supplies in many parts of the world, they begin to realize the potential of this vastly underrated resource.”

Now the Ramunno's and their neighbours have high quality, recycled irrigation water available and in use. They are aware of their responsibilities, which include OH&S proceedings when handling recycled water and public safety. Appropriate signage and site management plans have been put in place.

“Recycled water will bring to the people of Melbourne's north west a new confidence to grow fine produce, as well as generate new and more skilled jobs in farming, hospitality and tourism,” Mr McLean said.

## ■ werribee plains

MELTON Council has called on the State Government to introduce a specific waterways catchment management authority for the Werribee Plains as part of plans to redevelop some 50,000Ha of farmland using recycled water from Melbourne Water treatment plants.

In a submission following the government's recent call for public input to its plans, Melton Council supported a submission put forward by Agri West, the peak regional agribusiness body in Melbourne's outer western region, and its vision for the region to be “internationally recognised as an efficient sustainable agribusiness production region, which builds on viable and innovative market driven, agricultural, horticultural, forestry, viticultural and equine industries”.

The Agri West forum is made up of representatives from the Melton, Moorabool and Wyndham Councils, Western Water, Southern Rural Water, Melbourne Water, agribusiness representatives and landholders. The boundaries of the forum are loosely defined as the three council boundaries.

The submission noted that all three councils have significant pressures of urban/rural encroachment due to declining terms of trade in traditional dry land, agribusiness industries and the advancing urban environment.

“The advancement of the Werribee Plains Vision is viewed as crucial to sustainable development of the rural areas in the municipalities,” the submission stated. It advocated for a coordinator to facilitate educational outcomes and further promotion and development of the Werribee Plains Concept.

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**Western Water received the prestigious Public Sector “Organisation of the Year” Award by CPA Australia in recognition for the Sunbury – Melton Recycled Water Project and Western Water's Balanced Scorecard for driving business performance.**