

**Submission  
No 50**

## **INQUIRY INTO A SUSTAINABLE WATER SUPPLY FOR SYDNEY**

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**Subject:**

**Summary**

## **Inquiry into a sustainable water supply for Sydney**

**Attention: Mr Ian Cohen MLC**

### ***The Economics and Ethics of Recycling***

1. Enough has been said about Australia being the driest Continent and being among the largest per capita users of water in the world.
2. Australians in general have been relatively slow to embrace recycling of water on a wide scale and across all levels of Government, industry, services and domestic users
3. Governments seem to be perennially cash strapped and unable to allocate Significant budgets to invest in recycling infrastructure which will save money , save water and set an example to the community. A more cynical view might be that recycling only attracts votes from a certain class of voters
4. Perhaps Federal and State Government have realized this and by the introduction of grant schemes sought to provide a means for Local Councils, community groups and industry to introduce water recycling technology at grass roots and major user levels.
5. Efficient and reliable technology exists today to recycle water from many saving Hundreds of thousands of ML of potable water:

### **All Government**

While 2004 statistics show Governments only use 7% of Sydney's water, Governments at all levels have a duty to lead from the front in caring for our Water.

Some very visible and wasteful examples follow:

- a. Recycling the backwash water from Public swimming pools .

Class A drinking water can be produced from the backwash waste and returned to the pool, saving millions of litres of water a year . The waste from the process can

be treated with microbes and be used for subsurface irrigation.

Even without a grant, Payback time for the equipment is less than 24 months in most cases. There are more than 1500 public pools in Australia each discharging more than 100,000 litres of potable water to sewer each week. Recycling this could save 600 million litres potable water a month.

- b. **Commercial Laundries**, some of which discharge almost a million litres of water to sewer a day. As much as 90% of this can be recovered and returned to the wash cycle.

- c. **Carwashes** perform an efficient service yet the majority only recycle the small amount used in the rinse cycle.
- d. **Sewer Mining..** B grade water which results from primary and secondary treatment can be further recycled to Grade A standard and used for aerial irrigation. This of course promotes the growth of trees, shrubs, crops which enhance the environment. At a local level this could eliminate the need for local councils to use potable water for irrigation.

## Domestic Savings

**Residential single and multi unit dwellings use 61 % Of the 635,000 ML of the water used in Sydney in 2002/03. (1)**

Domestic usage is broken down as follows:

- a. Outdoor use : 27.3%
- b. Indoor Use : 17.0%
- c. Shower : 24.3%
- d. Washing Machine: 17.0%
- e. Toilet : 15.0%

If the water from Indoor use, Shower, and Washing machine was recycled (this is 57% of water used ) to Class A drinking standards, then pumped to a 1 KL tank and used for outdoor use , the gardens would be

in better shape by virtue of being watered twice as much and **27% of all domestic water usage would be saved. This would equate to a 16.47% saving of water in Sydney or 104,100 ML per anum.**

This technology is available today. Introduction of this dramatic water Saving strategy could start with DA's. All new dwellings and all renovations would be required to fit recycling to their houses/units and NOT use town water at all for "outdoor use"

Existing homes might be funded by grants, rebates on water/council rates, Interest free loans over a long period of time, or with the Political will mandate a time frame for the compulsory introduction.

- e. Recycling the backwash water from domestic (backyard ) pools.

There are more than 800,000 backyard pools in Australia.

***Each of these would conservatively backwash 1,000 litres to sewer***

each month. The aggregate of this is 800 million litres of potable water that could be saved each month. Considerable savings could be made by making DA's for new or renovated pools contingent on recycling at least

95% of their backwash. Other carrot and stick approaches could be formulated to convince existing pool owners to recycle

There are many other areas of primary and secondary industry that can contribute to massive water savings .

### **Conclusion**

It would be a travesty if State and Federal governments were to scrap their Grant Schemes on the basis that , "its just rained", "the money will be used for more urgent purposes" etc. The State Government has just saved probably \$2 billion by scrapping the de salination plant and the power required to drive it.

Sydney (and Australia) cannot afford not to recycle.

These simple strategies, don't require Royal Commissions, rather can be implemented through Department of Local Government, DEUSS, EPA , Health etc. There are abundant suppliers of reliable technology that can compete in the market, they are just waiting for the various levels of Government to lead the way, with examples, policy and possibly funding.

This submission has been prepared by **iPools** Australia. The company would be happy to provide technical material, address the committee , meet with Government experts or just about anything else you might want.

Yours Faithfully,

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Reference: (1) The Future of Water Supply- Briefing Paper 04/2004