WATER SERVICES
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

Key messages

Purified recycled water for drinking

1. Good water planning means looking at all options, without a foregone conclusion. Dams, desalination, groundwater, transfers, water saving – all can play a role.
2. Purified recycled water is now part of the water supply mix in over 35 cities around the world, especially in America.
3. Across Australia, Perth already has an active groundwater replenishment scheme using purified recycled wastewater; and Seqwater's Western Corridor purified recycled water scheme is due to be turned on as part of their drought plan. There are other examples of water supply innovation occurring elsewhere, such as in Orange, NSW, which built an active stormwater recycling scheme.
4. Purified recycled water offers many benefits - climate resilience, local control, it can be lower cost and more energy efficient than other options. It reduces the water taken from the environment, and reduces nutrient discharges to waterways.
5. It is scientifically proven, environmentally sustainable and all schemes are required to meet strict health and safety standards. It has been used around the world for decades.
6. All drinking water schemes have to pass strict health and safety controls before the water is ever provided to customers.
7. All water is used and reused, as part of the natural water cycle, and all around the world, where upstream towns discharge to rivers used by downstream towns as a water source. Technology simply speeds up what happens in nature.
8. Any water that we take from the environment contains impurities, which the water industry removes through treatment processes. We can take water from different sources and treat it to drinking water quality.
9. Nearly all drinking water sources contain treated wastewater from upstream communities. This 'de facto' or unacknowledged recycling happens all over the world, though it's not always well understood.
10. Water should be judged by its quality, not by its history.
11. Cities that now use purified recycled water as part of their drinking water supply, usually spend a few years doing grass roots community education about it first. Many were experiencing drought, but most places don't use it as a 'drought-only option' – it is mostly used as a sustainable long-term option all the time.
12. The community has shown they are open to learning more about it and considering purified recycled water in future.
13. Creating a demonstration project has been an effective way to explore this water supply option, allowing a city or region to learn about it and confirm it can be implemented if needed in future.
14. The first step in managing the water supply is always using the water we have wisely, through water conservation initiatives, but with time, and to help deal with challenges like population growth and climate change, eventually most places will need to increase their water supply.