



Kevin Humphries MP

Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water

Minister for Western NSW

MEDIA RELEASE

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TURNING WASTE WATER INTO RAIN WATER

Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water Kevin Humphries will today unveil a \$73 million recycled water plant at Mayfield capable of producing 3.3 billion litres of water that is cleaner than rain water.

The state of the art recycled water plant will supply water to Orica's Kooragang Island site, reducing its use of drinking water by the equivalent of more than 12,000 homes annually. The Kooragang Recycled Water Scheme has been built by Hunter Water over four years and is the largest recycled water project ever undertaken in the region.

The plant delivers highly purified recycled water from the Steel River industrial estate to Orica's Kooragang Island site via an 8 km pipeline that runs under the Hunter River.

Minister Kevin Humphries said the plant is the most significant step yet in the NSW Government's efforts to drought proof the Hunter region.

"Water Wise Rules save the Hunter about one billion litres of drinking water a year. The Kooragang Recycled Water Scheme can triple those savings.

"Until now, Orica has been the Hunter's largest water customer, using five per cent of all water consumed in the Hunter at its Kooragang site, enough to fill around 1,300 Olympic swimming pools.

"Orica has today switched the majority of its water needs from drinking water to recycled water. This will see them move from the position of the Hunter's largest user of drinking water to barely inside the top 20," he said.

Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment Senator Simon Birmingham said the Australian Government contributed \$4.2 million towards the project as part of a grant to Hunter Water under the Water for the Future initiative.

"The Australian Government supports initiatives that drive investment in diverse water supply options, and encourages industry and the community to use water more efficiently."

Hunter Water Managing Director Kim Wood said the recycled water being produced at the Steel River site is better than the quality equivalent of rain water.

"The water is so pure it is actually cleaner than what falls from the sky. It's actually more pure than drinking water given it lacks dissolved salts and minerals.

"The process of supplying water to Orica commences when raw sewage is treated at the Shortland Wastewater Treatment Plant. It's then piped to the Steel River site where it is passed through microfiltration and reverse osmosis to ensure suspended solids, bacteria, viruses and dissolved salts are removed.

"With the environment front of mind, Hunter Water has also planted 300,000 trees to ensure the Kooragang Recycled Water Scheme is carbon neutral.

“The project means eight percent of all sewage processed in the Hunter is now being converted to recycled water, and being sold to businesses such as Orica, power stations, dairy farms and even golf clubs.”

Key facts about the Steel River Recycled Water Plant:

- The Plant has the capacity to purify up to 3.3 billion litres of treated effluent each year, the equivalent water usage of 20,000 Hunter homes
- The Plant further purifies treated effluent from the suburbs of Sandgate, Shortland, Birmingham Gardens, Callaghan and Maryland
- The Plant passes treated wastewater through microfiltration and reverse osmosis, to ensure suspended solids, bacteria, viruses and dissolved salts are removed
- The Plant provides recycled water to Orica’s Kooragang Island site. Orica is currently the Lower Hunter’s largest user of drinking water, using almost 5% of all drinking water in the region. This project is capable of moving Orica from being the region’s largest user to just the 19th user.

The entire recycled water scheme consists of:

- A 750 metre pipeline to divert treated effluent from the Shortland WWTW to the recycled water plant at Steel River
- The recycled water plant, which includes raw water storage, chemical dosing and screening facilities
- An 8 kilometre pipeline crossing the south arm of the Hunter River from the Steel River site to Orica Kooragang Island
- A 1 kilometre pipeline from the recycled water plant to a sewer, transferring leftover, salty water from the reverse osmosis process to the Burwood Beach Wastewater Treatment Plant in dry weather
- A 1.5 kilometre diversion pipeline from Jesmond to Wallsend to transfer wastewater from the Burwood Beach wastewater system to the Shortland Wastewater Treatment Works, increasing the amount that can be recycled.

Recycled water in the Lower Hunter:

- At capacity the Kooragang Recycled Water Plant will almost double the water recycling rate in the Lower Hunter to nearly 8 billion litres per year (8.1% of treated wastewater)
- Other uses of recycled water in the Lower Hunter include:
 - Irrigation use by golf courses, trotting tracks and the Kurri Kurri TAFE
 - Industrial use at sites including Eraring Power Station and the Oceanic Coal Washery
 - Agricultural use by local farmers, woodlots and the Karuah effluent reuse enterprise.

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