



WaterWise NSW helps Port Macquarie-Hastings Council achieve a 15% reduction in water consumption!



“One of the principal challenges facing all water authorities is the need to effectively reduce water wastage and continuously improve the efficient utilisation of this precious resource ‘WATER’. Achieving community understanding, acceptance and long-term changes in the way we both provide and use water in the future will be essential in meeting this challenge.”

**Murray Thompson,
Water Supply Manager,
Port Macquarie-Hastings
Council.**



Background

The Hastings District Water Supply Scheme provides water to the urban centres of Port Macquarie, Wauchope, Beechwood and the southern arm communities from Lake Cathie to Herons Creek, for domestic, commercial, industrial and public consumption.

Increasing population growth in the Port Macquarie-Hastings Region is placing pressure on already stretched water supplies. The capacity of Council’s existing water storage at the Port Macquarie (2,500 million litre) and Cowarra Dams (10,000 million litre) and a range of demand management initiatives promoted by Council, are insufficient to provide drought security for the predicted growth of this region.

Objectives

Port Macquarie-Hastings Council is recognised for its leadership and innovation in water supply. The Drought Management Plan developed by Port Macquarie-Hastings Council provides both permanent water conservation measures, together with a timely and effective response to water shortages due to insufficient rainfall. It ensures that even with minimal annual water yield from the

Hastings River, water will still continue to be available on a restricted basis to meet water demands.

As part of its Drought Management Plan, Council has an ongoing ‘WaterWise’ community program to continually encourage wise water usage, water conservation and elimination of water wastage, all of which are carried out by WaterWise NSW staff members.

How the Savings Were Made

Council’s campaign, implemented by WaterWise NSW, is spearheaded by a school education program, which includes class visits, teaching material and aids, field excursions and onsite school projects. Council’s active education program also involves static displays at shopping centres and major events, such as National Water Week and World Water Day.

Since construction of the Cowarra Dam commenced, Council has operated free-guided tours of the site to the public (7,000 people since the year 2000). This has helped people to comprehend the amount of work that goes into ensuring water flows from their tap every time they turn it on.

*Working with you to make
every precious drop count*



Results from the WaterWise Education Program include:-

- *Reduced annual & peak day consumption levels, achieving a 15% reduction of water consumption over the past 10 years*
- *System leakage less than 12%*
- *High level of community awareness of water & environmental issues*
- *Delay in need to build and invest in expensive infrastructure*
- *Community acceptance & support for water supply projects & initiatives*
- *Council leading the community by example*

WaterWise NSW

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Each year the WaterWise NSW team work with the various business organisations to perform a water use audit, to quantify water use in the various activities undertaken and highlight potential efficiency gains. The costs are also compared with the savings and assistance with retrofitting is provided to these organisations.

The WaterWise NSW team also developed regular features in the media, including weekly and monthly WaterWise updates, media releases, articles and columns. As well the team were responsible for developing a variety of communication strategies, including brochures; WaterWise home and garden booklets; posters; competitions and promotional material – all these measures helped to reinforce the need for water conservation and raise the level of awareness of this precious resource.

Outcome

Combined, these measures have assisted Port Macquarie-Hastings Council to see a reduction in annual and peak day consumption levels; have seen a high level of community awareness of water & environmental issues and greater community acceptance and support for water supply projects and initiatives. Council's aim is to continue with its 'WaterWise' education and

community involvement programs in order to secure the efficient utilisation of this most precious resource 'WATER'.

The Future Looks Bright

Port Macquarie-Hastings Council was one of the first regional Council's in NSW to introduce a two-part user pays water tariff. The introduction of user pays has given customers a 'financial' incentive to reduce water consumption with the new pricing system designed to reward low water consumers and encourage increased efficiency by high water users.

Council is constantly reviewing future water supply needs and available resources and views the re-use of water as a key element in reducing current and future drinking water demands. They are now pursuing an ambitious project to produce "Reclaimed Water", which can be used to supply urban areas with an alternative source of water for approved uses. This will include commercial vehicle washing; business outdoor uses such as nurseries and bowling greens; toilet flushing and the irrigation of playing fields and open spaces. Depending on the proven success; it could be possible for this water to be approved for additional usage's to further reduce water demands on the existing water supply system.