

# Media Release



Thursday, 29 October, 2009

## Sports icon takes green challenge to the workforce

Well-known Collingwood and St Kilda defender Shane Wakelin donS a guernsey of different hues this week in his address to recent graduates of Western Water's certified training program, which is run in conjunction with Victoria University.

Mr Wakelin, who is an associate director of economics with Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, is also a keen environmentalist who has been trained as one of Al Gore's Climate Change Ambassadors.

Western Water Managing Director John Wilkinson said climate change and population growth are the two most significant drivers of strategic planning and capital investment in the Australian water industry today.

"The Australian water industry is anticipating massive investment in new and better infrastructure over coming decades," Mr Wilkinson said.

"Climate change is requiring us to overhaul the ways water is shared, not only between people and their towns and businesses, but also how we share water with the environment and countryside that grows our food and sustains our ecology.

"And population growth, particularly in Melbourne, only adds urgency to our task to rebuild infrastructure and find better ways to reuse every precious drop, and so lessen the impact of our footprint on this earth."

Mr Wilkinson said the overhaul of the Australian water industry is driving demand for tens of thousands of new professionals to be trained and for existing water industry professionals to update their skills to be equipped for these challenging times.

As an economist, Shane Wakelin is very aware of the challenges facing Australian businesses to change practices, to build more sustainable manufacturing and production techniques and processes, let alone making climate change part of workplace culture.

He congratulated Western Water on its involvement over the past few years in the Greenhouse Plus Challenge, and its own greenhouse gas reduction strategy to set targets and record and report on progress as part of annual workplace performance assessment.

"Practicing what we preach is essential for anyone and any business delivering such an essential service as water," Mr Wakelin said. "For me, it was a matter of using my position as a high profile footballer, with a passion for the environment, and taking the opportunities this gave me to touch people across different industries and communities."

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### About Western Water

Western Water is one of Victoria's 13 regional urban water corporations. We provide water, recycled water and sewerage services to over 53,000 properties and 134,810 people in an area of 3,000 square kilometres. Our region extends from Lancefield in the north to Melton and Rockbank in the south and from Myrning in the west to Bulla in the east. We incorporate parts of Hume City Council and Melton, Moorabool and Macedon Ranges Shire Councils.

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Mr Wakelin urged people from all walks of life and many different workplaces to take a leadership role to combat climate change and build more sustainable environments.

And he recounted his own experience of growing up in one of Australia's most water-challenged landscapes, the dramatic Eyre Peninsula of South Australia, the place where Goyder's Line<sup>1</sup> marked out success or failure for 19<sup>th</sup> century wheat and grain growers keen to raze wide open spaces and sow food crops for the then fledgling colony.

"Since then, about 80 per cent of the land south of this Line has been cleared for farming and the marginal conditions are now advancing further and further south," he said.

"Organisations like the World Wildlife Fund are not only lobbying governments but also corporations and organisations to increase best practice and build sustainability into their workplaces and their operations, and this includes developing more sustainable farming practices.

"Change starts from the bottom up but it needs strong leadership," Mr Wakelin will tell recent Western Water professional development graduates this week.

"I really appreciate the seven values of Western Water, particularly its emphasis on leadership and accountability.

"No-one is inspired unless they are set the right example and the sooner there is change at senior levels, the more significant and the quicker will be the cultural change within an organisation," he said.

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<sup>1</sup> Goyder's Line is a boundary line across South Australia corresponding to a rainfall boundary believed to indicate the edge of the area suitable for agriculture. North of Goyder's Line, the rainfall is not reliable enough and the land is only suitable for grazing and not cropping. The line traces a distinct change in vegetation. To the south, it is composed mainly of Mallee scrub whilst to the north salt-bush. In general Goyder's Line represents the demarcation of a long-term rainfall average of 10 inches (254mm).

With barely 30 years' knowledge of this new country to go on, farmers needed reliable information. In 1865, George Goyder provided it. He discouraged farmers from planting crops north of his line, declaring this land suitable only for light grazing. However farmers were optimistic. 1865 was a year of bumper rains, so many ignored Goyder and headed north, starting farms and planting crops. Just a few years later many had to abandon their farms. Goyder was proved correct and the land was indeed unsuitable for crops. Many farmhouse ruins can still be seen near Goyder's line.

There have been periods of development north of the line, but invariably nature has won out. Entire towns and farms were abandoned when there was a return to longer-term average rainfall. The line has proven remarkably accurate, an amazing feat since it was surveyed in just two months in 1865 by Goyder, then the surveyor-general of South Australia.

Goyder's line starts on the west coast near Ceduna and goes south-east across Eyre Peninsula to strike Spencer Gulf near Arno Bay. It continues from near Moonta north to Crystal Brook and Orroroo then south-east past Peterborough and Burra to the Victorian border near Pinnaroo, crossing the Murray River south of Blanchetown. Much of the land immediately north of the line is covered by saltbush. Agriculture is possible near the Murray River further upstream only because of irrigation using water drawn from the Murray.

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Mr Wakelin will address 23 Western Water personnel, who have completed either a Certificate 2 or Certificate 3 in Business and Water Operations, or a Diploma in Front Line Management over the past 12 months.

In thanking Mr Wakelin for his address, Mr Wilkinson said Western Water now reports directly to the recently-formed federal Department of Climate Change, and is about to tender its first year voluntary reporting results into the new national greenhouse emissions reporting scheme this week.

“Western Water is well-positioned to be able to show a clear picture of where emissions come from and how what we do reduces them because we invested significantly a few years ago in developing data-based modelling,” Mr Wilkinson said.

“This puts us in a very fortunate position in these early days of counting the carbon, at a time when business sectors face enormous cultural change challenges worldwide.”

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