

Media Release



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Biosolids no longer going to waste

Biosolids from recycled water plants could have a promising future as a farm fertiliser, judging by the results of a study conducted by Western Water in Woodend.

“Biosolids are nutrient-rich organic material, a by-product of producing recycled water,” Western Water’s Managing Director, John Wilkinson, says.

“We have been monitoring biosolids as an alternative farm fertiliser, and now results are in showing evidence that they have the capacity to improve soils and crop quality.

“The study also showed grain grown using biosolids has more protein and is lower in starch, making it better for livestock.”

The study was carried out at the Woodend farm of Gavin Lester-Smith, where biosolids have been used for the past five years, and monitoring of soil, crop, grains and straw has been carried out for the past two.

Mr Lester-Smith says he is supportive of the use of biosolids in farming, after trial results showed using biosolids improved the quality of his crop of triticale (a type of wheat crossed with cereal rye used for stock feed).

“I think it’s a great thing,” Mr Lester-Smith says. “I think as a society we have got to learn to recycle nutrients.”

Biosolids have a consistency similar to soil, and contain valuable nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus. The application of biosolids must comply with criteria set out by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) to ensure beneficial and sustainable use.

“Many years ago, biosolids were considered a waste product, and the challenge then was how to safely store this waste,” Mr Wilkinson says.

“Now we see the production and use of biosolids as part of our vision of a sustainable future, helping to reduce waste and improve soils without the use of conventional fertilisers.”

The farm study was conducted using biosolids from the Gisborne Recycled Water Plant. Biosolids from the Sunbury Recycled Water Plant are also being reused, after being composted, in the landscaping industry.

“Now that our first farming study has found biosolids boost crops, we are looking at increasing their use on farms in the region, with the aim of reusing 100 per cent of the biosolids we produce,” Mr Wilkinson says.

“Using biosolids not only benefits soil and crops, it mean using less traditional fertilisers. Two more farmers have recently taken up the use of biosolids, and as confidence in using biosolids builds in the farming community we expect demand to increase.”

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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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