

Media Release



Thursday 21 January 2010

White roofs cool Western Water workplaces and cut energy use and costs

Western Water's crews have noticed a considerable difference in the indoor temperature at their depot buildings despite Victoria's mercury rising into the 40s in recent weeks — thanks to a space-age paint product that beats heat at its own game.

Gisborne and Melton depots, which are both constructed of steel and galvanised iron, put the paint to the test prior to Christmas and noticed an immediate difference of up to 10 degrees Celsius in the indoors daytime temperature during the hot spells since then.

Last week, it was the turn of Sunbury recycled water treatment plant to trial the paint's efficacy on a brick building with a flat steel roof.

Western Water Managing Director John Wilkinson said the new roof-top treatment was one of a number of practical measures being rolled out to cut energy use and greenhouse gas emissions working towards Western Water's end goal of zero net emissions by 2017. At the same time, these measures are improving summer, and winter, workplace conditions, especially for outdoors personnel.

"This paint product is a very smart retrofit solution for people who work, or live, under hot tin roofs and I think we will be seeing it used in many places in days to come," Mr Wilkinson said.

"It offers a relatively inexpensive way of keeping summer temperatures inside to at least 10 degrees below the heat outside, and when you think of the difference between 30 degrees and 40 degrees, that's a big saving on the use of cooling systems."

The paint product is an infrared heat-reflective, water-based acrylic paint, which prevents heat build up by using ceramic spheres, which are vacuum-filled and suspended in the paint.

The beads reflect up to 90% of solar radiation and, as vacuums do not transfer heat, they deflect UV heat away from the roof and building surface. This can lower external wall and roof surface temperature by up to 50°C and reduces indoor air temperatures between seven and 10 degrees on a hot day. The finished product looks the same as conventional paint and, while there are various colour options available, white paint works most effectively.

Mr Wilkinson said other energy efficiency measures introduced at the Gisborne, Melton and Sunbury have included changing over to new energy efficient lights and reflectors, putting in motion sensors so lights do not have to stay on all the time and installing whirly birds and skylights to allow better air movement and passive light.

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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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“Cooling systems and air-conditioning units are big energy consumers and have been cited as the reason for power failures during heatwaves,” Mr Wilkinson said.

“However, there are a range of very practical and affordable alternatives to beating the heat, which cut both bills and greenhouse gas emissions.

“Western Water is looking for a 10 to 15 per cent cut in the use of cooling systems at these plants as a result of these measures,” he said.

“Our next move will be to give pump sheds the white paint treatment; these require mechanical cooling during hot spells to maintain optimum performance.”

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