

# Media Release



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## Sunbury students trial tap and bottled water

Sunbury Secondary College students recently put what they drink under the microscope as part of a World Water Day activity at Western Water laboratories.

A recent student survey found about 95 per cent of students at the college regularly purchase bottled water, although they often refill and reuse the same plastic water bottle throughout a day, sometimes longer.

Western Water staff teamed up with environmental science teacher Adrian Daniell to give 23 Year 10 students a tour of the filtration plant and a presentation and demonstration comparing the sustainability of tap water versus bottled water.

Samples of the two popular bottled water brands and the Sunbury tap water were put through the rigours of scientific testing as students undertook a blind taste and odour test according to professional criteria. The students also examined the three samples for turbidity, chlorine, pH levels (acidity) and salinity – four key indicators of water quality used in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines, to which all national water businesses work.

The results found no significant differences in the quality of the three types of water sampled, with all four measures recording results well within Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. Slightly higher salinity readings of the bottled water samples were explained by the naturally occurring mineral salts in the water.

The student testing showed that taste and odour detection varies considerably between people. Descriptions by the students included a musty, earth odour and a bitter taste for some bottled water while some students detected a slight chlorine odour with the tap water.

But when it came to factoring the environmental credentials into the race, the tap water was the clear winner.

“In compiling the background for students on costs of production and supply of bottled water versus tap water, the results speak volumes,” Western Water’s education advisor Rebecca Colless said.

“For example, one bucket (10 litres) of tap water delivered by Western Water produces about one black balloon (10gm) of greenhouse gas emissions,” she said.

“The same 10 litres of bottled water produces around 120 black balloons.”

“And when we compare costs, people pay on average about \$2.50 for every litre of bottled water they buy.

“The same amount of tap water costs about one fifth of a cent a litre to deliver to your tap.”

students would return to class and consider their findings further, with the aim being to use their experiences and test results to help inform a term two school project on designing bubbler water fountains for the community.

### 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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