

USE & RECYCLE

The facts about recycled water

Domestic use of recycled water is an exciting new initiative in Australia. South East Water and its recycled water customers are taking the lead in water conservation.

Recycled water – the way ahead

Using recycled water alleviates the environmental strain caused by drought.

Residents in particular estates around Melbourne will have access to this service in addition to their regular drinking water supply.

The introduction of a dual reticulation system – where Class A recycled water is delivered through separate pipes – generates lots of questions for new users. The following facts will inform you about all aspects of your daily use of recycled water.

Although the water is recycled it is still a precious commodity and should not be wasted.

It is safe to use recycled water

Incidental and direct contact with Class A recycled water is safe. It is produced according to strict guidelines developed by the Department of Human Services (responsible for protecting public health) and the Victorian Environment Protection Authority. Strict monitoring of the treatment process ensures that these standards are continuously met. You may notice that recycled water is slightly discoloured. There is no need for concern as it is treated to a very high standard.

You cannot drink recycled water

Although recycled water is highly treated, it is not permitted for personal uses including drinking, cooking or bathing. If you do accidentally drink it, don't panic. The likelihood of getting sick is extremely low. If there are signs of illness seek medical advice.

Uses of recycled water

The recycled water used in residential settings is high quality water. However it should only be used for:

- Flushing toilets
- Watering the garden, including vegetables
- Washing cars, houses (external), outdoor furniture
- Fire fighting
- Use in ornamental ponds and water features. However, water may need to be changed regularly as algae may grow*.

** Algae may grow due to the nutrients in the recycled water*



Recycled water is suitable for gardens and pets

According to Victorian Environmental Protection Authority and Victorian Department of Human Service guidelines, Class A recycled water is safe to use for pets' drinking water and to water plants and vegetables. Just as with normal handling of vegetables, they should be washed before consumption. Refer to our gardening fact sheet for more information.

Washing the car with recycled water should be done on the lawn

Recycled water has a high level of nutrients, which is good for the garden but not good for the stormwater system as it can upset the waterways. Washing the car on the lawn waters the lawn as well as reducing the risk of runoff into stormwater drains.

You will receive recycled water through a separate pipe

This means there are two water supplies; drinking water and recycled water. Recycled water comes from a recycled water treatment plant and is provided to participating housing estates through purple coloured pipes.

Note: To gain maximum benefits you should have a recycled water tap (purple tap) in your front and backyard. You may also have a drinking water tap in your backyard.

Permanent Water Saving Rules do not currently apply to the recycled water system

Using recycled water means that you can maintain green lawns throughout the year.

Only plumbers licensed with the Plumbing Industry Commission can work on your recycled water system

The Plumbing Industry Commission inspects all houses during the construction phase to ensure that recycled water and drinking water pipes have been plumbed correctly. However, recycled water customers need to conduct an annual check to ensure that recycled water pipes and drinking water pipes have not subsequently become cross connected. This is a simple process in which the whole family can participate.

You will be sent instructions to guide you through the process within five days of becoming a customer. This is a part of the standard homeowner information kit.

In addition, South East Water will annually audit a proportion of customers' homes to ensure cross connection has not occurred.

The use of recycled water will benefit the environment

Firstly, it will reduce the household demand for drinking water, which will conserve our precious supplies. Secondly, reusing water that is treated by state of the art treatment facilities means less discharge goes into our oceans and rivers.

Two individual water meters will sit on your property

Each property will have two separate meters, one for drinking water and one for recycled water. The meter will be supplied, installed, maintained and owned by South East Water as part of the cost of connection to the recycled water service.

Your quarterly water bill will itemise the recycled water charges separately

Service and usage charges for the recycled water system will appear as separate items on your water bill and will be priced according to the lowest of the three pricing tariffs of drinking water.

Recycled water will not impact on sewage disposal charges

You will still pay approximately the same amount for your sewage disposal because the volume disposed of to the sewer will be about the same. However the method of calculation may need to change.

The way you use your recycled water, including informing your visitors, is your responsibility

Where a dual pipe supply system is available to your property, you should notify all visitors, including contractors and social visitors of the appropriate uses. This includes not drinking water from a purple tap.

Note: Recycled water taps, pipes and meters are purple to ensure that plumbers and residents do not confuse drinking and recycled water fittings. Their colour must not be changed. Taps are signed – "Recycled water, do not drink".

Recycled water is used in residential developments worldwide

Melbourne and Sydney have recycled water being delivered across various housing developments. The Rouse Hill dual reticulation scheme has been operating in Sydney since 1998 and supplies over 15,000 houses.

Various countries including Japan, Singapore, United Kingdom and America also employ recycled water.



Recycled water is:

- Waste water treated to a very high standard (Class A)
- Suitable for flushing toilets and outdoor use
- Providing a sustainable future for Victoria

tap
into
it.