

MEDIA RELEASE

1 August, 2006

People won't swallow sewerage

Industry and agriculture should be encouraged to use recycled sewerage water before households are forced to use it, a World Vision conference in Adelaide will hear tonight.

With domestic water only accounting for about 5 per cent of all consumption, and agriculture and industry – the main contributors to water scarcity - using the majority, policy makers should get smarter about water use, World Vision's International Water Forum will be told.

“Policy makers would be better off finding ways to get Australians to use recycled sewerage water in other ways like on their veggie garden, cars and in the laundry. Or better still tackling agriculture and industry, which account for x per cent of water consumption,” presenter Professor Jennifer McKay, from the University of South Australia, will explain.

“People will not easily buy the idea of recycled sewerage water for drinking,” says Professor McKay, who has studied water policy in Australia and overseas for 20years.

But while Australians stall on the uses of recycled sewerage water, much of the developing world remains deprived of this precious commodity, the conference will hear.

“A sixth of the population, mostly throughout Asia don't have safe drinking water. And 1.8 million people die annually from water-bourne diseases,” says Wateraid Australia's Peter Dwan.

“As a rich country, with good sanitation, we should be leading the way on recycling and helping other countries achieve their basic human right to clean drinking water.”

Oxfam's Jonathan Cornford will also be talking at the International Water Forum: defending ecosystems and resurrecting community rights.

The International Water Forum will be held at the Adelaide Town Hall on Tuesday 1 August, 5.30pm. It is a free event presented in conjunction with AusAID and supported by the Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre and the University of South Australia.

Bookings can be made via the Hawke Centre, www.hawkecentre.unisa.edu.au or by calling 08 8302 0215.

A forum for students will be held before the event at 4-5pm.

Media contacts:

Michelle Rice 0402 503 227

Sarah Hudson 0413 701 031