



ACT STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT REPORT 2011

SUSTAINABILITY STORIES

Bottled water free zone: first for an Australian university



Project contributors test out the UC bubbler water (Photo courtesy of Media & Communications, University of Canberra)

The University of Canberra became Australia's first bottled water free university on World Water Day, 22 March 2011. The idea, from a student project in an innovation class, has led to the phasing out of bottled water on campus, effectively eliminating the 140,000 plastic bottles on campus each year.

The initiative began when students Greg Stewart, Ellie Mortimer, Rachel Wooden and Diana Bannerman asked the question, "Could the University of Canberra go without bottled water for a day? How about for good?" They presented their plans to the campus and the University's sustainability planner, Beth Mitchell who came on board to assist.

To involve the whole university community in the project, students in marketing, industrial design and other disciplines planned aspects of the implementation as part of their university courses.

The project was supported by the ACT Chief Minister's Department and the action group *Do Something!* who helped the University in negotiations to install more bubblers and refilling stations for fresh, free drinking water on campus.



Filling up with fresh water (Photo courtesy of Media & Communications, University of Canberra)

One of the challenges of the project was getting the retailers onside. The project team arranged for alternative suggestions to be offered by the University vendors such as refillable aluminium SIGG water containers and water from energy-efficient water vending machines.

The initiative is a logical step in helping to reduce waste in the ACT. In Australia only 43% of plastic bottles are recycled so phasing out bottled water has meant a reduction in waste going to landfill, energy use and pollution. Now, with additional outlets for fresh water readily available on campus, students still have easy access to water as a healthy drink choice and they can save money at the same time.

The University of Canberra hopes to become a role model in sustainability by influencing other Australian university campuses to take on the bottled water challenge.

For more information on sustainability at the University of Canberra, visit their website, <http://www.canberra.edu.au/monitor/2011/feb/10-bottledwater>



A water bubbler on campus (Photo courtesy of University of Canberra)

