

Environmentally Sustainable Activities and Events: *Water and Sustainability*

The volume of water you use at your event and the impact your event has on water quality should be a core aspect of your event planning and delivery. Water waste and contamination is a major community issue given current water scarcity. Unsightly and dangerous water loss can have the potential to blight an otherwise successful and safe event. Given the current prominence of water issues throughout the community, the following measures should be considered for your next event.

General:

Have clear signs and messages for staff, contractors and the public informing all of the water saving plan you are implementing. Walk around and discuss your plan with people and be clear that you all share a similar idea of what needs to be done to make your event resource smart and who is going to do it. Think about where water will be used on site and specific means that will reduce water use. For instance:

- Have a sink already filled with water for rinsing dishes and cups in food areas instead of using a running water tap.
- Provide buckets and troughs for areas where food is to be prepared so that fruit and vegetables can be rinsed efficiently instead of under a running tap.
- Check for leaks in taps, pipes and dishwasher hoses to reduce unintended water loss.

Water Efficient Appliances:

With many events and festivals there may be limited opportunities to implement water saving devices and technologies. Venues that are hired usually have permanent fixtures and other services hired from off-site generally offer limited retrofitting opportunities. However, the more that event organisers ask venues whether they have dual flush toilets, flow control valves, water efficient showers or waterless urinals, the more venues will realise that these things are what people want. This will stimulate venue operators to better cater for this emerging market.

Desert Cubes – Waterless Urinals

One possibility to reduce water use in a facility that has a urinal trough is through the use of 'Desert Cubes' and other similar products. Using chemical and microbial technology that are environmentally friendly, these cubes eliminate the need to flush urinal trough toilets reducing the average 151,000 litres of water an average urinal uses per year by 98%. By using such products at your event you can make venue operators and patrons aware of such products and their benefits while reducing the amount of water your event will use.

Sustainable Toilets:

There are new alternatives to the traditional toilet blocks and 'portaloos' generally available for event hire. 'Natural Event' 'enviro loos' are an example of the new options which are providing sustainable solutions for events. 'Natural Event' provide composting toilets that do not use water for flushing and also create an end product of soil enriching fertilizer, worms and castings. 'Natural Event' offer permanent and temporary structures for events and festivals, as well as consultancy with all authorities. There are other suppliers beginning to emerge so be sure to investigate in your local area.

www.naturalevent.com.au

Drinking Water Supplies:

A great way for efficient, effective and accessible drinking water to ensure your patrons are hydrated and healthy while reducing energy consumption is through the use of 'Hydration Stations'. A 'Hydration Station' is a mobile water trailer with stainless steel troughs and drinking taps that supplies drinking water to local community festivals, concerts and sporting events. Aside from the benefits to your event patrons of large quantities of easily accessible drinking water, 'Hydration Stations' provide multiple benefits in achieving a more sustainable event. They provide patrons with free drinking water and eliminate the need to purchase more bottled water. This leads to reductions in waste, reductions in energy to produce the bottled water and reductions in carbon emissions from transporting and shipping bottled water.

In conjunction with the use of 'Hydration Stations' event organisers such as the 'Sustainable Living Festival' encourage attendees to bring their own reusable water bottles from home to use at the hydration stations they supply. This is conveyed through publicity and ticketing prior to the event.

Many Victorian water retailers offer 'Hydration Stations' to events at varying rates. Contact your local water retailer for more details.

'Bicycle Victoria' offers a similar service through the supply of 'biden bars'. These essentially fulfil the same purpose as a 'Hydration Stations' in that they supply drinking water through a series of pipes and hoses for large amounts of people. 'Bicycle Victoria' offers these at varying rates depending on the nature of the event. Contact Bicycle Victoria for more details.

Bringing in recycled water from offsite:

Some water retailers and authorities offer recycled water and groundwater free to business, agriculture and industry. Recycled water may be able to be used for purposes such as for the washing down of vehicles, sheds, and other facilities.

It is very important to note that the use of processed recycled water is restricted and there are health requirements that may have to be considered in its use. There are restrictions on where and how recycled water is used and the proximity and duration in which the public may come into contact with recycled water after its use. These restrictions vary depending on where the water was sourced and its quality. For these reasons, the use of recycled water is limited. If you want to find out whether recycled water is able to be used for particular aspects of your event, please contact your water business for more information.

Despite the limitations, there can be great specific uses for recycled water use such as for flushing toilets in 'portaloo's'. As an event operator hiring toilets, you can request your 'portaloo' operators try to source the water they use for flushing their toilets from an appropriate recycled source.

Once you have contacted your water retailer or authority and have worked out viable uses for recycled water, there is the matter of getting the water from its source to your site. Many water businesses may supply water for free but you may have to cover transport and haulage costs. There are some instances where water may be supplied and delivered free by water distributors to councils or community organisations. Contact your water business for more information.

Water Weights:

When marquees are used at events on hard surface areas and cannot be secured to the ground via pegs and rope, they are sometimes weighed down using containers filled with water to ensure they stay upright. This can be an unnecessary use of water. Another way to weigh marquee's down to save water is via the use of sand bags. However, if you do use water, ensure that you are able to use it for another purpose (such as watering a garden bed) once your event is over.

Water Quality:

When setting up your event, consider ways of preventing contaminants entering stormwater drains and waterways. In most instances there will be very simple and effective means in which run off can be avoided and stopped.

Waste water that contains contaminants (such as the water that generally comes from our toilets and kitchens) is generally disposed of through our toilets and sinks and goes through the sewerage system to a treatment plant where it undergoes a cleansing process. However, water that goes into our storm water system along paved streets and gutters does not receive any treatment before it enters creeks, rivers and the sea. It is therefore important when you are setting up your event to be aware of where your waste water is flowing and ensure that it enters the appropriate water processing system.

With this in mind, place generators and other equipment that may leak chemicals in areas where runoff will be absorbed or directed away from the storm water system. If there will be any paints or other such chemicals at your event, again, ensure they don't enter the storm water system. Check with your water authority, retailer or local council for the best way to dispose of any dangerous contaminates.