

Lessons from the journeys of others

1

It can be done

Communities around the world have implemented purified recycled water schemes for decades. It could be successfully implemented in Australia, if circumstances warrant.

The three 'T's:

Trust • Transparency • Time

2

Trust is critical for securing support for purified recycled water

Transparency and open information sharing will help to develop and maintain this trust.

3

Establishing purified recycled water is complex and takes time

It takes time – up to a decade. People need to be taken on a journey to be comfortable with it. Rushing or imposing deadlines increases the risk of rejection or backlash.

4

Seeing is believing

Investing in a demonstration plant, visitor centre and tour program for 'place based learning' will greatly improve community understanding and support. It can showcase and prove the reliability of the technology, and pre-empt stigma reactions through calm, engaging learning environments.

The experience should be carefully crafted with sequenced messaging to build overall awareness and understanding, and may include sampling the water.

5

Wording and imagery are critical

This will be somewhat specific for each community, so local research is important. Choose words and branding that resonate and do not alienate. Technical jargon confuses people and doesn't build trust.

6

News media coverage has a profound impact on public acceptance

It can make or break a scheme. Proactively engaging key influencers and the media, leveraging social media, and using expert testimony and third party advocacy can help build trust and transparency.

7

Political support is essential

Political cycles can polarise an issue, and force people to take a side. Good engagement across the full political spectrum, to gain and keep support, is critical.

8

Grass roots education and engagement

Can be more effective than high profile marketing activity or 'above the line' presence.

'Water should be judged by its quality and not its history'

LUCAS VAN VUUREN, SOUTH AFRICA

9

General education around the urban water cycle and context

Will help prevent stigma and encourage acceptance. Provide information on the range of long-term supply options, climate trends and cost.

10

Regulators play a powerful role

They will lead government and community perception, and have the authority to determine whether purified recycled water can proceed. It is their role to take a conservative approach to risk management, so it may take a long time for them to become comfortable and produce a regulatory framework. Good regulatory engagement, and high transparency, are essential.