

# Bottled water banned to save environment

## EXCLUSIVE

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Environment Reporter

ABOUT 4000 NSW public servants have been told to stop drinking bottled water — because it is bad for the environment.

The Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) has sent a memo to staff saying bottled water will no longer be provided at its 120 offices — and encouraging staff to avoid buying their own.

“Staff are asked to consider refilling water bottles from the tap. All major centres in NSW have a clean, reliable water supply,” a DECC spokesman said.

“Staff can buy their own bottled water but we would hope they consider the environment.”

The decision to scrap bottled water was made on environmental grounds and extends to communal chilled water dispensers.

“The environmental costs of bottled water, producing, transporting, refrigerating and disposing of the bottles, have led DECC to eliminate all non-essential bottled water purchases from the department,” the spokesman said.

A small number of the bottles will still be bought for occupational health and safety reasons, like fire-fighting operations or for field work.

The department’s decision could trigger a domino effect and hurt Australia’s bottled water market — \$385 million last year for 250 million litres.

Manly Council will next month vote on a mayoral motion to eradicate all bottled water from council buildings and functions.

Mayor Peter Macdonald is teaming up with environmental campaigner Jon Dee to write to every council in Australia encouraging them to do the same — in line with a similar move by San Francisco earlier this year.

The aim of the campaign is to reduce bottled water usage by 25 per cent across the country in two years.

“It’s an environmentally disastrous product, quite frankly, because we’ve got very good tap water,” Manly Councillor Barbara Aird said.

“The consumption of bottled water is apparently increasing by about 10 per cent per annum.”

The Local Government Association

last month passed a motion supporting the launch of a campaign to alert people to the environmental impact of water bottles.

Then there is the impact on the hip pocket. According to the most recent research, tap water costs about \$1.20 per tonne, while one tonne of the pre-bottled variety costs as much as \$3000.

DECC estimated about 200ml of oil is used to produce each litre bottle of water, including in the plastic, transportation and refrigeration.

Australians’ bottled water use last year was responsible for more than 60,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions — the same amount 13,000 cars generate in 12 months.

Global consumption of bottled water is now estimated at around 180 billion litres a year.

## Real cost of bottled water

The 250 million litres Australians drank last year:

- Used 456,131 barrels of oil to produce
- Cost us around \$385 million
- Was responsible for around 60,000 tonnes of greenhouse emissions
- Amounted to \$3000 per tonne of water (tap water costs around \$1.20 per tonne)
- Used 200ml of oil for every litre of water bottled

Source: DECC

Daily Telegraph

Should bottled water be banned?  
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