



May 3 2005

ABN 20 006 403 256
1st Floor, 388 Bourke St
Melbourne VIC 3000
Telephone: (03) 9642 0422
outside Melbourne 1300 739 756
Facsimile: (03) 9642 0016
watermarkaustralia.org.au
enquiries@watermarkaustralia.org.au

MEDIA RELEASE – Wake up call needed on water

A new survey has found that despite the seriousness of our water situation, most Victorians do not yet have the knowledge and information necessary to make the significant adjustments necessary for a sustainable water future. Despite the massive funds that are being spent urging people to save water, the general public does not have a clear understanding of water issues or what they can do to help.

In the first integrated study of its kind, the **Watermark Australia Project** commissioned pollster Irving Saulwick to conduct a telephone survey in March, of 1000 metropolitan, rural and regional Victorians about their current knowledge and attitudes towards water.

The key survey findings include:

- ***A surprising number of people don't know where fresh water comes from when they turn a tap on in their home.***
More than a third of respondents could not accurately nominate where their fresh water came from, and close to one in ten respondents had no idea at all.
- ***Young people in the age group 18-24 had less knowledge about key water issues than people in older age groups.***
Young people were less aware of the source of fresh water to households, less aware of suppliers and less able to identify opportunities to make water savings.
- ***Only a third of all respondents identified agriculture as the greatest user of water.***
Most respondents believed that water use was equally distributed across households, industry and agriculture.
- ***People have a general understanding about water efficiency but they tend to be imprecise as to how to achieve greater savings.***
Many feel they are doing as much as they can.
- ***Almost ninety percent of respondents believe that climate change is occurring.***
People are uncertain however as to possible effects of climate change. More than half believe it will lead to less rain. Others believe it will lead to more rain, or were not sure of any effects.
- ***A quarter of respondents could not accurately identify their water retailer.***
On average, about half of the respondents believed their water retailer was a privately owned company.

The results of the poll came as no surprise to Project Director Mary Crooks.

“These survey results confirm our initial hunches about the need for some circuit-breaking community involvement and education around water. Coming straight after the EPA's Report on the large size of Victoria's ecological footprint, it is clear our current levels and rates of water use are not sustainable.”

“The results vindicate our decision to design and roll out the **Watermark Australia Project** with the specific aim of raising quickly and sharply, people's literacy about water. We need many more people in the broader community to become alert to the seriousness of our water situation and to appreciate that we don't have a lot of time to get the right policy and community settings in place,” she said.

For further information about the survey and the Watermark Australia project, contact Mary Crooks before 9.00 am on (03) 9489 5296 or after 9.00 am at the Victorian Women's Trust on 03 9642 0422; or Wayne Chamley on 0425 744 984; or Irving Saulwick on 03 9537 2192 or 0417 390 762.