

World-first water-efficiency labels

By 2005, water-efficiency labels will be mandatory on all shower-heads, washing machines, dish-washers and toilets sold in Australia, with voluntary labelling suggested on taps, urinals and other products.

The new Water Efficiency and Labelling Standards scheme, agreed by Federal and State Environment Ministers at October's Environment Protection and Heritage Council meeting in Perth, will save 87 200 million litres of water a year, about 5% of annual household water use, and \$620 million on consumers' bills.

State-endorsed Commonwealth legislation will be drafted during 2004 for the labelling scheme, which is expected to be the first of its kind in the world.

Ministers also agreed to work with the Natural Resource Management Council to develop the National Guidelines on Water Recycling to promote the safe reuse of wastewater for

non-drinking purposes. The Guidelines enable large-scale treated sewage and grey water to be used for residential, urban and industrial purposes, with further guidelines to be developed for on-site grey-water treatment, including for high-rise apartments and office blocks.

Completion of stage one of the Guidelines is expected in December 2004, after consultation with State governments and national health, medical and water services groups.



Tracey Nicholls

The severity of the last drought has seen a marked shift in our attitude to domestic water use.



Rob Blakers

The Savage River region, an area of current concern over logging commencement, was a focus for photographers during the 'Fortnight in the Tarkine'.

Old and new gather for the Tarkine

DURING OCTOBER, in the remote Tarkine rainforest of Tasmania's north-east, 20 of Australia's best wilderness photographers gathered with writers, documentary makers and visiting journalists to spend an intense, creative fortnight in the pristine bush to capture the region's essence in unique photographic and descriptive work.

The event, dubbed the 'Fortnight in the Tarkine' aimed to generate new material for a lavish book and touring exhibition on the region, to be published next year by WWF Australia, but was also about bringing the country's current and new generations of wilderness photographers together, in the field, for the transfer of specialist professional skills and experience.

Event organiser and book editor, Ralph Ashton, said 'Getting the best photographers and writers together on-site to shoot in different locations across the Tarkine seemed a great way to generate unique images, work creatively together, and to close the gap between Australia's older, accomplished wilderness photographers and

the new generation of younger professionals who are just starting out.'

It is hoped that the WWF book project will raise the profile of the Tarkine region. Covering a remote area of 377 000 ha, including 175 000 ha of old-growth myrtle forest, it is one of the last remaining untouched areas of Australia, and is seen as a hidden, Gondwanan jewel by conservationists.

The area has been the subject of a long-running and emotional battle over its status as a logging zone. On 4 June this year, at the end of a 20-year halt passed in 1982, the Tasmanian Government announced its intention to log the heart of the Tarkine rainforest in a 20 000 ha section called the Savage River Pipeline Corridor.

The WWF is now working with local groups to develop regional strategies which combine economic growth and nature conservation in the north-west. The book, exhibition and subsequent documentary on the Tarkine fortnight will reinforce ongoing promotion of the area's significance.

Tax deduction encourages rural conservation

Landowners who sign voluntary conservation agreements – or covenants – with government authorities can now claim a tax deduction for any resulting decrease in land value, thanks to a legislation amendment approved by Federal Parliament in mid-October.

The change removes a disincentive for landowners to sign covenant agreements which protect native vegetation, and commit to on-ground action such as fencing off rare plants, seed collecting and tree planting.

More than 2000 covenants, covering nearly 1 million hectares, have already been signed or are in negotiation.



CSIRO Forestry and Forest Science

Seed collection is one of different on-ground actions agreed to in some conservation covenants.

More information:
Conservation covenants:
www.papl.tas.gov.au/cc.html