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Barwon Water announces biosolids partner

Treasurer John Lenders announced today that Plenary Environment has been awarded the contract to construct and operate a biosolids drying facility at the Black Rock water reclamation plant.

Barwon Water Chairman Stephen Vaughan said the biosolids drying facility was an important step in Barwon Water's long-term goal to have 'no-waste' sewerage systems – where 100 per cent of recycled water and biosolids were committed to sustainable use.

"Plenary Environment will construct and operate a fully-enclosed thermal drying facility to treat Barwon Water's biosolids to the highest treatment grade, creating biosolids pellets suitable for use as nutrient-rich farm fertiliser or greenhouse-friendly alternative fuel," Mr Vaughan said.

"Biosolids are produced when a natural sewage treatment process, such as that used at the Black Rock water reclamation plant, is used to create recycled water.

"These biosolids are 85 per cent water," Mr Vaughan said. "In the drying facility, the wet biosolids will be raked across heated plates drying and forming biosolids pellets."

Extensive consultation processes over several years resulted in community criteria being written into Barwon Water's tender documents for the project. The outcome was the selection of a thermal drying facility that:

- is fully-enclosed with zero odour beyond Barwon Water's fence
- is no taller than the existing buildings at the Black Rock water reclamation plant
- produces the highest treatment grade of biosolids possible
- has no visible air emissions
- includes substantial investment in landscaping and aesthetics.

Mr Vaughan said siting the drying facility at the Black Rock water reclamation plant made efficient use of Geelong's existing sewerage system infrastructure and meant four million litres of recycled water would be used each day rather than valuable drinking water.

The 20-year contract to design, build and operate the biosolids drying facility has a net present value of \$74 million. Barwon Water used the *Partnerships Victoria* model to ensure value for money for residents and secure the expertise of the private sector.

Plenary Environment is a consortium led by Plenary Group, an Australian owned public infrastructure specialist and includes the water project management expertise of Earth Tech, and the construction and fabrication expertise of Applied Group. The consortium will utilise a thermal drying technology solution developed in Europe by Keppel Seghers.

Plenary Group Principal, John O'Rourke, said the consortium had fully tested the thermal drying solution in collaboration with Barwon Water.

"Importing a pilot plant some months ago to ensure the capability of the technology under local conditions has given us great confidence in delivering the highest quality biosolids treatment solution," he said.

"This facility is an investment in the future, helping us to reduce our impact on future generations by managing our biosolids responsibly," Mr Vaughan said.

Barwon Water and Plenary Environment are holding Open Days at the Black Rock water reclamation plant from 11am to 3pm on October 6 and 7, 2007. The Open Days are an opportunity to learn more about biosolids, see where the biosolids drying facility will be built and how it will operate.

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