

Orange City Stormwater Harvesting

Bang the Table was commissioned by Orange City Council to ask the community whether it felt comfortable incorporating treated stormwater into the town drinking water supply. The consultation confirmed that the vast majority of the community were very comfortable with Council's risk management strategies for dealing with water quality and were, in fact, very keen for Council to implement the proposed capital works as quickly as possible.



Client
Orange City Council

Project
Stormwater Harvesting

URL
www.bangthetable.com/stormwater

Bang the Table was commissioned by Orange City Council to seek community input into a proposal to add treated stormwater to the city's drinking supply. On June 24, 2008, the NSW State Government announced \$4.45 million in funding for drought proofing projects in Orange. Council matched this dollar for dollar. At the time of the consultation, plans were well advanced for stormwater harvesting in a catchment which included hard surfaces, such as roads, footpaths and carparks, in the city. It was pointed out that urban stormwater, like other raw water catchments, can include a range of pollutants and that a Review of Environmental Effects available through the Bang the Table website, provided details of the treatment process to manage the risk associated with stormwater. The consultation addressed two key questions: (1) Do you have any concerns with stormwater harvesting? And (2) Are you comfortable with the water quality measures Council will implement?

Drought conditions in western NSW are forcing Councils to focus on a range of options to secure their town water supplies. Some of these options, such as integrating treated stormwater as a "shandy" into the drinking water supply can be contentious if not handled with

care and if the community isn't given adequate opportunity to discuss the issues.

The consultation through the website was delivered as a standalone methodology. It was promoted extensively in the local newspaper and on local radio.

The site was visited over 1000 times by 740 people. 45 people registered to participate in the conversation. Question #1 received 2179 page views, 19 votes, 40 comments, 162 agrees/disagrees, and had a total of 36 participants. Question #2 received 1129 page views, 11 votes, 15 comments, 31 agrees/disagrees, and had a total of 20 participants. 130 people downloaded 239 documents, and 51 people read the FAQs.

The ratio of total visits to unique visitors indicates that the majority of people visited the site once, browsed the issues, and did not feel the need to get involved in the debate. This is a good indication that the majority of community feel quite comfortable with Council's handling of the issue. This interpretation is supported by the nature of comments on the site, the vast majority of which were supportive and keen for Council to implement the project as quickly as possible.

Council felt comfortable moving forward with the projects in the knowledge that it had broad community support.

Crispin Butteriss PhD
Melbourne, Australia
+61 (0)411 291 460
crispin@bangthetable.com

Matthew Crozier
Newcastle, Australia
+61 (0)422 00 22 44
matt@bangthetable.com