

## DESERT ECO SYSTEMS

Wednesday, 12 September 2007

**The Hon. A.L. EVANS:** I rise today to bring to the council's attention the great work of Desert Eco Systems. In a few government buildings, pubs and corporate headquarters, male members might well have seen the sign 'desert.com.au' and square blue cubes in urinals across South Australia. This is a very interesting subject. When one presses the button to flush, one finds that the urinal is not operational. It has been disabled to save water. A major provider of these water saving devices is a company known as Desert Eco Systems. Its 'Desert cube waterless urinal system' is said to be capable of saving 151 000 litres per annum—that is 151 kilolitres.

The Desert cube waterless urinal system is very simple to install and requires no change to the existing urinal. The cubes work as follows: the cubes break down over a period of one to four weeks. As they dissolve, tiny microbes are released into the waste system. The microbes eliminate odour causing bacteria, as well as the unsightly scale deposits in the urinal and down in the waste pipe. As the beneficial microbes keep the urinal clean without the use of large amounts of water, the flushing mechanism is disconnected. This not only saves an enormous amount of water but also eliminates the need for chemical sanitisers, deep cleans and deodorant blocks, all of which are expensive and extremely harmful to our environment.

Desert Eco Systems' research reveals that urine is almost 98 per cent water and only has a mild odour. The trouble is that when it is put in a wet environment (like a flushing urinal) bacteria can be spread. The Desert cubes use microbial technology to interrupt bacterial digestion that produces the truly unpleasant odours.

Family First spoke with Desert Eco Systems about its success and sought to ascertain how much its technology is being used in state government facilities. Desert Eco Systems expressed some frustration at this government's inaction in adopting this technology. They have seen the cubes rolled out in only a few sites, such as the Transport SA building in Walkerville. However, an arrangement made in January with Supply SA for widespread roll-out has seen only one site roll-out in 10 months. They compare this with Supply SA's Queensland equivalent, which has rolled out its technology into 500 schools. Family First calls upon the Ministers for Environment and Conservation, Water Security, and Sustainability and Climate Change to approach Desert Ecosystems (or others offering similar technology) and roll out this fantastic technology to effect significant water savings across South Australia.

As a matter of fact, any minister with urinals in their department (for instance, police stations, prisons or mental health facilities) should take note—and let me take the education department as an example, given the Queensland comparison I mentioned. There are at least 1 000 schools and administrative facilities within the education department alone that would have at least one

urinal (and I might add that it would send a great message to students about conserving water if schools had waterless urinals). Conservatively, 1 000 school urinals saving 151 kilolitres of water equals 151 megalitres—and that is the equivalent of 12 hours' flow over Lock 1 at Blanchetown late last month. Like I say, I am being conservative, because I think that that saving could be easily doubled or tripled across the education department alone—across the whole Public Service savings would be massive.

I can proudly say that Family First's environmental credentials on this matter are far from being down the toilet. On the contrary, I think that even the urinal can be used to make massive water savings for the water security of this state.