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Water bubblers: Praise the purge on plastic packaging

Menios Constantinou

THE humble water bubbler, once a prominent fixture at schools, beaches, parks and playgrounds, is under threat.

A few years after Aussies started to prefer drinking the clear stuff out of plastic bottles with fancy labels, the bubblers are all but extinct.

That's one of the key findings of a national poll commissioned by the Bottled Water Alliance: 79 per cent of Aussies surveyed said there weren't enough water bubblers in their area.

Ninety per cent of participants had no idea where to find their local bubbler and two-thirds would buy less bottled water if there were more bubblers in their area.

The campaign to stop Australians drinking bottled water began in earnest in 2007, when the Bottled Water Alliance first attempted to influence drinking habits by asking local councils to stop providing bottled water at functions.

The group's organiser, Jon Dee from Planet Ark, said people should be drinking water from the tap instead of damaging the environment by buying it in a bottle.

Manly Council has taken the lead in eradicating water bottles by installing filtered-water bubblers on the beachfront and corso. But what about our councils south of the Harbour Bridge?



The Bottled Water Alliance is calling on councils to bring back the water bubbler.

There are 172 drinking fountains in the Sydney Council area, including 119 that are managed by the council and 53 by other authorities.

Woollahra Council has 19 bubblers at 13 different sites. It has also banned bottled water at council functions and in council staff offices.

"Staff are provided with filtered tap water and encouraged to re-use personal water bottles," a spokeswoman said.

In November last year, Waverley Council began identifying suitable locations for new water bubblers. Mayor Sally Betts said: "We have a number of water bubblers scattered throughout our municipality and we're intending to install some in our playgrounds in the near future."

Your check list

This week's checklist for you to help reduce your carbon footprint:

- Fit water-saving tap filters
- Insulate your hot water pipes
- Install energy-efficient lighting
- Insert automatic door closers
- Switch office lights off at night
- Don't turn air con up too much
- Maximise buildings' natural light
- Install internal blinds or curtains
- Install a rainwater tank

Every week we will be running a check list of different initiatives and ideas for you to try at home or in the office. If you want to tell us about your and your community's efforts to protect the environment, email us.



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