

MEDIA RELEASE

Contact: Ronan Carroll Ph: 5150 4434



21 May 2015

Howitt Park's on tap for inaugural water refill station

Bairnsdale's Howitt Park is East Gippsland's first recreational venue to receive a 'Choose Tap' branded water refill station as part of a region-wide healthy lifestyle initiative involving East Gippsland Water, community groups and East Gippsland Shire Council.

Provided jointly by East Gippsland Water and the Howitt Park Management Committee, the Howitt Park refill station is located close to the sports ovals and pavilion. Free to use, it comes equipped with a bubble tap that is wheelchair accessible, a drink bottle filling point and a dog bowl.

Those who stand to benefit from the facility include the many players of all ages participating in the regular soccer competitions hosted by the park, as well as those taking part in Little Athletics events and rowing, and cyclists using the nearby East Gippsland Rail Trail.



Celebrating their new water refill station with East Gippsland Water's Joe Rettino are: Howitt Park Management Committee President Tony Claridge (second left) and members of East Gippsland United Football Club

The aim of 'Choose Tap', originally developed by Yarra Valley Water in Melbourne, is to encourage the community to drink tap water in preference to bottled water and soft drinks, as part of a healthy lifestyle. This also makes financial and environmental sense.

Said East Gippsland Water's Chairperson, Joe Rettino: "We're delighted to be working with the Howitt Park Management Committee, the Council and other community groups to deliver the 'Choose Tap' initiative and its key messages around the region.

"Water is essential for healthy living, but here in Australia there has been an increasing tendency in recent years to drink pre-packaged, bottled water instead of tap water, which makes no financial sense. Indeed, Australians currently spend more than \$500 million each year on bottled water, needlessly bypassing much cheaper water supplied direct to the tap in their own homes. Tap water is also much cheaper and healthier than soft drinks.

"By installing water refill stations in recreational areas we are making tap water even more accessible and encouraging people to reuse and refill their drink bottles. This is much more environmentally friendly than using pre-packaged bottled water, where the plastic used is often unsuitable for recycling, with many bottles ending up at landfill and also left as litter."

Communities being targeted over coming months with 'Choose Tap' water refill stations include Bairnsdale, Newlands Arm, Nicholson, Lakes Entrance, Orbost, Mallacoota and Omeo, with others set to follow.

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