

# Schools water efficiency and awareness project

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## Background

The City of Cape Town's Water Demand Management (WDM) department has been involved in school projects for several years, although these have generally been restricted to educational activities during Water Week and school competitions, due mainly to limited resources.

Cape Town is a water scarce area, and although the per capita water consumption appears to have dropped slightly over the past three years, this could be attributed to the aggressive media campaign in 2000/2001 and tariff increases. Schools are one area where there can be substantial water use (and/or abuse) and the City's Water Demand Management team therefore initiated its Schools Water Efficiency Project in February 2003, which supports several of the City's Water Demand Management Strategy objectives and is aligned with the IDP. All schools within the Cape Metropolitan Area (approximately 850) are to be incorporated in 3-5 years, including follow-up visits and assessments.

## Purpose

The purpose of the project is to empower schools within the City's boundaries to bring their water efficiency up to an acceptable level within a five year period, thereby substantially reducing the amount of potable water wastage in this area. (It can be noted that removal of automatic flushing urinals (AFUs) alone in schools can save up to R8 000 on the annual water account, as was achieved at Marine Primary).

## Objectives

The objectives of the project are:

- To establish a supportive relationship with schools/learning institutions
- Initiate savings from day one with the installation of Hippo bags in cisterns (see illustration on p 94)
- To establish a schools database with information collected
- Initiate talks with the Department of Education to negotiate and facilitate empowerment mechanisms for schools to carry out recommended retrofitting and/or repairs
- To provide schools with an Action Plan for improved water efficiency.

## Establish a supportive relationship with schools/ learning institutions

A newsletter was developed and sent round to all schools to explain the project and offer support and advice. A small team of two facilitators (who are ex-school teachers) visit schools to raise awareness, capture information and demonstrate how to install the Hippo bags into the cisterns. Should a caretaker not have basic plumbing skills (i.e. changing of tap washers), this service can be offered at the City's Water Services Training Centre.

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## Initiate savings from day one with the installation of Hippo bags

In an immediate effort to assist and motivate the schools, Hippo bags are provided for each toilet cistern, so the water savings can begin from day one. At this stage other simple advice is given, for example: advising the turning off of AFUs after school hours.

## To establish a schools database with information collected, and Initiate talks with Department of Education to negotiate and facilitate empowerment mechanisms for schools

A schools database has been established, which identifies the water use facilities in each school and indicates what needs to be done to bring each school up to an acceptable water efficiency level. This will give the WDM department the necessary information to begin to work more closely with the Departments of Education and Public Works to ensure the necessary mechanisms are in place to enable the recommended works/repairs and/or retrofitting to be carried out.

## To provide schools with an action plan for improved water efficiency

Action plans are drawn up for each school visited which are given to schools on the follow up visit. The plan offers suggestions and specifications to achieve optimum water efficiency.

## Benefits

In the process of striving towards water efficiency, the schools will find many benefits. The school environment improves as leaks and drips are identified and eliminated; awareness levels of the Caretaker are raised; awareness levels of the Head and the learners are raised as the project develops as the project is linked to future Water Week activities; and co-operative partnerships between the City, Department of Education and Department of Public Works will be supported and strengthened.

In the majority of cases the cost of the work needed could be recovered within a few months, thus releasing more funds for other important things such as text books, stationery and other necessary