

Water worries

The water that is taken for granted, bubbling out of the taps may run out in less than ten years.

It may last for 50 years or 100 years, it may even last for a thousand years, nobody knows for sure.

Nobody knows, if the water pumped from the bore is prehistoric or is recharged from somewhere close by. Nobody knows, if larger demands on the water basin will cause contamination from salts as it attempts to refill. Nobody knows, how big the water basin is.

One major myth is that the water used by Coober Pedy is connected to a huge underground lake that stretches through Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia. NOT TRUE. In fact, the water from the SRII bore flows in the opposite direction. It flows from the WSW to the ENE and is believed to originate somewhere in the Mt Willoughby area and discharges in the vicinity of Lake Cadabara-wirracanna, but nobody knows for sure.

According to a report completed in 1978 on the SRII bore, "The recommended discharge rate is 1090m²/day" (approx 10,000 galls/hr). At the moment the bore is being utilized at 70 - 80% of its capacity, "this keeps a bit in reserve", said a council spokesperson.

There is cause to be concerned if Alice Springs is used as an example. A popular tourist destination where nearly every motel has a swimming pool and locals back and front yards are overflowing with lush tropical growth, dispersed with patches of lawn. Football ovals, hockey pitches, olympic size swimming pool and a golf course with green grass on it disguises the fact that it is in the desert.

Alice Springs now faces the problem of the water table from which they pump, falling at the rate of 1.8 metres a year. This has prompted many people to advocate the damming of the Todd River to supplement the diminishing underground water.

Coober Pedy is the driest part of the driest State

in the driest continent on earth.

The 'greening' of Coober Pedy is a wonderful idea. The thought of rows of gum trees and other plants lining our roads and surrounding the proposed development in the triangle, to many, will be a dream come true. But, has anyone estimated the amount of water required for this mirage? While nobody disputes the need for a grassed oval, a qualified spokesperson said, "To keep the oval green, it will take 1 inch of water over the whole area every day of the year." The dream is not impossible and there are examples of the way to go for the future.

Both Leigh Creek and Roxby Downs practice water conservation, yet both towns have ovals, pools and trees everywhere. Extensive use of bark chips, drip systems and land contouring all help to create this oasis.

Before any of this can happen on a large scale in Coober Pedy many questions need to be answered, least of all the questions surrounding our bore.

There have been rumblings of discontent within the town as to the cost of water, especially when the price is compared with Adelaide. (In Coober Pedy, the cost is \$4.85 K/litre, Adelaide costs are 65c K/litre).

As water is such a precious commodity, rather than lower the price and encourage more water usage, money may be better spent on water conservation methods as well as better planning.

Jon James



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