



# Ethical Dilemma

## Recycled Water

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| Description       | An ethical dilemma: Exploring the ethics and sustainability issues regarding conservation of the water supply.  |
| Task Type         | In-class activity, tutorial, assignment   |
| Time              | 45 mins – 1 hour  |
| Level             | All   |
| Class Size        | Small or large classes. Class needs to be divided into groups of 5 students   |
| Learning Outcomes | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Demonstrate an understanding of the global and local perspectives of multiple stakeholders</li> <li>✦ Demonstrate an understanding of the role of personal, social and corporate responsibilities.</li> <li>✦ Demonstrate an understanding of future consequences</li> <li>✦ Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical issues involved</li> </ul>   |
| Method            | <p>This is a relatively open-ended activity to promote creativity and to authentically represent likely situations that occur in the workplace (i.e., employees are not necessarily prompted or given highly structured directives in ethical situations). Students are given a description of the scenario and a list of questions to discuss in small groups, they are free to select from these questions or choose their own, with the general aim of coming to a better understanding of the ethical issues and the important aspects for ethical consideration.</p> <p>Students are asked to read materials before the class (see attached materials). Have a discussion and the present and/or write up their examination of the ethical issues.</p> |

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| Concluding Activity  | <p>Each group should present a summary to the class of the issues covered in their discussion. The class discussion should cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✳ The issues that arise from different stakeholder perspectives</li> <li>✳ The key ethical aspects involved in their consideration</li> </ul>  |
| Assessment           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✳ If the group oral presentations are to be assessed, students should be given some time to prepare them, for example the presentations should be in a subsequent session.</li> <li>✳ Alternatively groups could be asked to submit a written report. Students could be assessed individually on a written report covering the question. The length would depend on the weight given to the assignment. Material covered in group discussions would form a basis for individual assignments.</li> </ul>  |
| Tips                 | <p>Try to encourage students to work it out for themselves because that is what they will need to do in workplace situations.</p>   |
| Student Instructions | <p>Form groups of five students and allocate a representative position to each: one student each should represent the State Government, another the consumer, another health authorities, another the body responsible for treating and distributing the water and another pharmaceutical companies.</p> <p>After reading the material attached and undertaking further research by visiting relevant websites about the issue answer the following question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✳ Is this the right thing to do – what are the ethical and social ‘issues’ associated with this debate?</li> <li>✳ Is this specific to Queensland/Australia and are the issues different?</li> <li>✳ What other ‘issues’ might impact on this decision.</li> </ul> <p>The views of all stakeholders need to be addressed in answering the questions.</p> |
| Additional Material  | <p>You might like to look at these websites and include your consideration of them into your response to this ethical dilemma.</p> <p><b>References</b><br/> <a href="http://www.qwc.qld.gov.au">www.qwc.qld.gov.au</a><br/> Article in The Australian <a href="#">[link]</a><br/> Waste Water Practitioners <a href="#">[link]</a><br/> NWC <a href="#">[link]</a></p>   |

## Summary of Scenario

A key aspect of resource management relevant to Australia is fresh water. The prolonged drought in 2008 has resulted in a realisation by many that existing water storage capacity in areas such as South East Queensland in particular would fall way short of requirements. Harsh water restrictions and consumer education are implemented to change the consumption habits of consumers. Businesses are now required to prepare Water Efficiency Management Plans (WEMPs) with the aim for each business to reduce water consumption 'by a minimum of 25% or best industry practice'. From 1 July 08 in Queensland, the State Government now controls the distribution of water via the South East Queensland Water Grid Manager to local councils who then distribute to the consumer. The State Government is proposing to introduce recycled water into the drinking water to increase water capacity and has spent millions of dollars investing in infrastructure. The water will be pumped from water and sewage treatment plants into the dams from which drinking water is drawn for the large cities in the region. The price of water will rise in most local council regions until 2015 when a common price for water should be struck. In some regions this will mean an increase of from 3 to 5 times the current rate. At present there is a great deal of debate about the case for recycled water and in 2007 one regional city council voted strongly against recycled water for drinking purposes despite the fact that level 6 water restrictions were in place and dam capacity at only 6%.