

The Australian

Cate Blanchett flushed with pride at theatre company's water harvest system at The Wharf

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Sydney Theatre Company's Cate Blanchett launches the new rainwater harvesting system at The Wharf at Walsh Bay in Sydney. Picture: Alan Pryke

Source: News Limited

ACTOR Cate Blanchett is inviting everyone at the Walsh Bay arts precinct in Sydney to "have a shower or use the loos".

That's because a new cutting-edge project at The Wharf, which houses the Sydney Theatre Company and other arts organisations, will result in about 11.3 million litres of water saved every year.

Blanchett, along with her husband and fellow STC artistic director Andrew Upton, was in Sydney on Friday to turn on the taps of the rainwater harvesting system - one of only a few in the world.

The harvesting, storage and reticulation system will capture rain from the vast roof of The Wharf, which is equivalent to half the playing field of the Sydney Football Stadium.

It will then be stored in a huge pipe that runs 500 metres under the pier, providing 100 per cent of non-potable water for all resident organisations.

"We're all here at the Shawshank Redemption to turn the tap on the rainwater harvesting and reticulation system," Upton joked at the system launch on Friday, before struggling to remember how much water would be saved every year.

He was quickly prompted by his wife.

Blanchett, in her turn at the microphone, was at times drowned out by blackhawk helicopters swooping around the harbour as part of an Australian Army training exercise.

"Today is a great example of how many helicopters there are in the city of Sydney," Blanchett said, amid laughter from the audience.

"But it is a great example of how science and the arts are intimately connected. Both sectors are purveyors of experimentation and the embodiment of the imagination.

"We're all pleased to bring this innovative engineering technology into our creative lives today and indeed to be a showcase of how such systems can function to great economic and societal benefit.

"So, have a shower or use the loos."

The system, designed by Australian projects firm Sinclair Knight Merz (SKM), is the first of its size in Australia and is one of only a few in the world.

It is part of STC's Greening The Wharf project, which saw the installation of more than 1900 solar panels on the roof of The Wharf in 2010.

Organisations at The Wharf that will benefit from the system include the Bangarra Dance Theatre, Sydney Dance Company, Australian Theatre for Young People, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs and Regional Arts NSW.

"The entire project has been made possible through a unique collaboration with private philanthropists, corporate and government support, both state and federal, who really understand the incredible opportunity that greening this amazing arts precinct represents not only for the organisations down here but for the city of Sydney and the state," Blanchett said.

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