

Canberra uni to ban bottled water

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The University of Canberra (UC) is introducing a total ban on the sale of bottled water on its campus.

It is believed to be the largest ban of its kind in Australia and the first across a university.

The ban was the idea of students and developed with input from the environmental action group Do Something.

Do Something founder John Dee says the ban will stop 143,000 plastic bottles from being sold annually.

Instead, students will have access to free water bubblers similar to the ones installed in the New South Wales town of Bundanoon, where water bottles have been banned since 2009.

"By supplying free water and cheap, chilled water, the university will be helping students to break a bottled water habit that's costing Australians half-a-billion dollars a year," Mr Dee said.

He says he hopes other institutions follow UC's lead.

"If the 13,000 students and staff at the University of Canberra can do this, there's no reason why every other university in Australia cannot do the same," he said.

"It will save students money. The water's better for their health and it will make a really big environmental difference."

UC vice-chancellor Stephen Parker says the ban makes environmental sense.

"The evidence is now really strong that bottled water does environmental damage," he said.

"The bottles themselves take about 200ml of oil to make, you can use up to 3 litres of natural water to produce 1 litre of bottled water and we also know that about 43 per cent of bottles are recycled so the rest ends up as rubbish or landfill."

Professor Parker says on-campus retailers agree to the change.

"Given that Canberra's got good and plentiful fresh water we just can't see the environmental argument to continue the sale of bottled water," he said.

"What we're also doing as part of this whole measure is introducing new bubbler machines and vending machines for different kinds of water sales, all of which will use refillable containers rather than the bottles that are currently sold.



The University of Canberra plan to ban the sale of bottled water. (ABC News: Giulio Saggin)

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"So actually we're hoping that consumption of water will go up on campus. It will be fresh and natural tap water. It won't be bottled water."

The ban is being phased in with sales of bottled water on the campus to end by March 22.

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