

STUDENTS IN FIGHT AGAINST POLLUTION: Canberra Times 17th September 1990



Freshwater High School student, Lee Hitchenson, explains pollution testing to NSW state politicians.

School children in Sydney, Illawarra and the Blue Mountains are able to report freshwater pollution to the Water Board with the help of Telecom Plus' electronic messaging service, Keylink, as part of the new Streamwatch project.

Streamwatch was launched earlier this month at the Prospect reservoir in Sydney by NSW Minister for the Environment, Tim Moore, and the NSW Minister for School Education, Virginia Chadwick as well as other local members of parliament including Barry Morris for the Blue Mountains. Initiated by the Water Board in collaboration with the Department of education, Streamwatch will enable students to monitor river and creek pollution by collecting and testing water samples throughout Sydney, Illawarra and the Blue Mountains.

Data collected by schools will be entered into their school computer and sent directly to the Water Board computer, using Keylink electronic messaging facilities.

"More and more schools are being equipped with computers and Keylink," said the Water Board managing director Bob Wilson.

"The use of electronic messaging enables us to collect data in an electronic format which goes directly into our computer without having to re-key it. Such a practical and efficient system is meeting a lot of enthusiasm from the schools approached so far," he added.

Participating schools receive a special kit to analyse water samples for phosphorus, nitrates, turbidity, total solids, temperature, faecal coliform, PH and Oxygen.

Tested water results are entered on to the school computers using a standard Water Board format and sent directly to the main frame database using Keylink's messaging capabilities.

"Streamwatch's main advantage is that it is a project which enables school children to take practical action for the environment while using available technologies," said Telecom Plus National Sales and marketing manager Phil Madden.

Lee Hitchen, a year 10 student from Freshwater High School, one of the first participating schools said:

"We have been doing regular tests at Greendale Creek which runs from Brookvale to Curl Curl Beach. The creek goes through an industrial area, so we can find out exactly where the pollution sources are, by testing the water all the way up to the source. This program is fantastic because, while using our school resources in computers and science, we can actually report on the pollution level and then do something about it. I am glad to be able to contribute to keeping clean the water going on to the beaches we swim from Lee added.

According to Bob Wilson, by the end of the year, twelve schools throughout the state will be participating in the scheme and sending in weekly test results.

"We hope to have up to 200 schools within a couple of years," he said. "This will provide us with a fantastic source of information, monitoring, very finely, the water cycle in the Sydney, Illawarra and Blue Mountains regions."

Water pollution is not restricted to ocean sewage problems, so Streamwatch is part of the wider GREEN (Global Rivers Environmental Education Network) program to fight against water pollution in rivers and streams.