

BY BRETT ROBINSON

Continuing its drive to improve best management practices across the golf course maintenance industry, the AGCSA is set to launch a new water management initiative. ATM looks at how the initiative will work and how it will ultimately benefit golf courses Australia wide.

AGCSA launches water management initiative

The AGCSA is in the process of establishing a Water Management Initiative which will be made up of an online and interactive water management portal and support network

The Australian Golf Course Superintendents' Association (AGCSA), in conjunction with the Australian Golf Industry Council (AGIC), recently conducted research into how the current drought and subsequent water restrictions have impacted Australian golf courses.

The results of the survey indicated that the industry is under severe strain from the drought, threatening the economic growth of the sport and jobs of the 23,000 people directly employed in the industry. The study also reported golf courses affected are currently pursuing a number of short-term practices to minimise water use.

Alarming, the survey also found that only 40 per cent of golf courses in Australia had a formal water management plan in place. In light of such findings the AGCSA has recognised that for the long-term security of the industry, all golf clubs should complete a water management plan. Such a process would provide a comprehensive audit of water management practices at the club and explore alternate solutions for drought proofing the course.

To drive this, the AGCSA is in the process of establishing a Water Management Initiative which will be made up of an online and



Central to the initiative is an online template which turf managers can use to assess current water management practices

interactive water management portal and expert support network.

The central purpose of the portal is an online water management plan template for turf managers that not only assesses current practices but offers up water saving options in the form of products and services for turf managers to become aware of products and their water saving effectiveness in turf applications.

The water management portal will also offer advice on:

- How to apply for water grants;
- Contact details of water consultants;
- Reports of successful water management plans and the resultant changes made;
- New technology updates;
- Updated information on current water restriction levels for the turf industry across each state;
- Updates of research into drought tolerant turf species;
- How to prepare for change to alternative water sources such as stormwater harvesting, treated effluent and sewer mining for the turf industry etc...;
- Action planning and cost recovery budgeting for the installation/purchase of water saving infrastructure.

The initiative also aims to conduct training seminars to upskill or refresh the irrigation knowledge of turf managers.

GOVERNMENT GRANTS

As part of the new water management initiative, the AGCSA will also seek support through the various rounds of water grants schemes available from both Federal and State Government.

The AGCSA will utilise NSW-based water consultancy company Water Conservation Group (WGC) and as a test case will put in an application to receive a grant from round five of the Victorian Government's Smart Water Fund.

WGC was successful in applying for grants totalling \$1.045million on behalf of the Aged Care Association of Australia in rounds two and three of the NSW Government's Water Savings Fund in 2006.

The first of those projects, which received \$545,000, was a water and energy savings programme across 10 residential aged care facility laundries which aimed to save 70 million litres of water a year. The second project also focused on water and energy savings in a programme that would install rainwater tanks, dual-flush toilets and water-efficient showerheads at 50 participating aged care facilities. Together the two projects aimed to save 120 million litres of drinking water a year.

The Victorian Government's Smart Water Fund has handed out about \$20 million to over 120 individuals, community groups, businesses and industry that are delivering innovative sustainable water use projects benefiting metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. One such project funded is the Victorian Golf Association's evaluation of saline-tolerant

grasses and reclaimed water for golf course irrigation. Round five presents a further amount of up to \$5 million available.

If the AGCSA is successful in its Smart Water Fund application, it will potentially be able to provide hundreds of thousands of dollars to golf clubs in Victoria to pay for infrastructure improvements at clubs which

have been identified through the initiative's online water management plan portal.

After reviewing this test case and depending on its success, the AGCSA would then open the opportunities up to other water consultants to provide a similar service in further rounds of funding.

AGCSA joint general manager Scott Petersen says that if this test case proves successful not only will the association be able to provide golf clubs with a central location for all necessary water information, they will also be able to access funds to help them deliver substantial water management savings at club level. The AGCSA will work closely with the state superintendent associations to implement the project.

For further information about the AGCSA's water management initiative, contact Scott Petersen on (03) 9548 8600 or email scott@agcsa.com.au

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COMMUNITY WATER GRANTS

Earlier this year the Federal Government announced a further \$5 million in funding for 167 projects under Round 2 of its Community Water Grants scheme. A number of turf organisations were successful. They included:

NSW

- Gerrigong Bowling and Rec Club - \$37,173
- Petersham Bowling Club - \$42,870
- Jerilderie Golf Club - \$43,533

QLD

- AFL Queensland - \$42,709
- Pine Rivers Golf Club - \$39,984

VIC

- Valley View Golf Club - \$45,436
- Ballarat Bowling Club - \$27,370
- Bendigo Golf Club - \$43,182

Round three grant applications will be announced in November/December.