



Melinda Pavey
Minister for Water, Property and Housing

MEDIA RELEASE

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MAN'S BEST FRIEND ON THE HUNT FOR HIDDEN LEAKS

Two hunting pedigree puppies are being trained to sniff out a different kind of prey - hidden leaks from the city's wastewater networks.

Winnie, a highly intelligent Cocker Spaniel, and Ziggy, an energetic English springer spaniel, are the first dogs in Australia to detect both leaks and odours in the wastewater network.

Minister for Water, Property and Housing Melinda Pavey said these puppies may be cute but they are both being trained for a very important job.

"Winnie and Ziggy will help us to find and fix hidden leaks from the 26,000 kilometres of wastewater network, which if left undetected can lead to overflows into our creeks, waterways and the environment," Mrs Pavey said.

"As far we know, no other water utility around the world has trained dogs to detect leaks and odours at levels as low as these dogs can detect. Winnie and Ziggy are able to identify the presence of sewage in minute concentrations, even when we might think it is okay.

"This is part of the NSW Government's on-going commitment to protect our water, public health and the environment.

"These highly-trained puppies will complement the existing approaches being used by our Sydney Water workforce, ensuring our water and wastewater services continue running reliably for the millions of people depending on these services every day.

The dogs have undergone months of intensive training with one of the country's leading dog trainers, Steve Austin in Sydney.

Sydney Water General Manager of Customer, Strategy and Engagement Maryanne Graham said these breeds are natural hunting dogs, historically used for hunting a variety of game.

“The dogs have an unbelievable sense of smell so when our regular methods are restricted by access for example, we can use the dogs to investigate and identify leaks,” Ms Graham said.

“Steve will also begin training a new puppy, Splash, who’ll be taught to find leaks on the water network, using the smell of chlorine used to disinfect drinking water, which will be a first in NSW.”

“Hidden leaks on the water network can turn into major breaks and if we can identify them early, we can reduce water wastage, which is essential regardless of whether we’re in drought or not.”

During the drought, Sydney Water doubled proactive inspections on the water and wastewater network and increased its number of frontline crews responding to water main breaks caused by prolonged dry conditions and tree roots damaging pipes.

Sydney Water manages a vast and complex network of more than 50,000 kilometres of water and wastewater pipes across Greater Sydney, Blue Mountains and the Illawarra.

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