
Wastewater Sampling in the Fight Against Coronavirus

South Gippsland Water is one of 17 water utilities nationally who are participating in an innovative wastewater surveillance program. The research program will look to gather data regarding the coronavirus (COVID-19) virus within samples of wastewater taken from Wonthaggi's sewerage system.

The wastewater sampling project will help inform policy makers and health authorities about potential clusters of people infected with the virus and timelines of potential outbreaks. This sample analysis will help inform coronavirus (COVID-19) controls by indicating disease prevalence in the community.

Managing Director South Gippsland Water, Philippe du Plessis said that, "The size and location of Wonthaggi provided opportunity to take part in the program which it is hoped will help to identify new cases in areas previously thought to be free from coronavirus (COVID-19). Help identify emerging outbreaks and the extent of asymptomatic infections within an area. Providing better data relating to the peak of infections and the persistence of the virus within the community".

South Gippsland Water is participating in this national program with Water Research Australia (WaterRA) that includes representatives from various water utilities, health agencies and research groups.

The Australia-wide ColoSSos Project – Collaboration on Sewage Surveillance of SARS-COV-2, will track and monitor the presence of the virus that causes coronavirus (COVID-19) and its persistence in the Australian sewerage network, providing information on where it is present in the population.

Mr du Plessis confirmed that "sampling has commenced at Wonthaggi's Wastewater Treatment Plant and will feed into the national data in the hope that the research may yield important new information to help inform disease control measures such as social distancing to flatten the curve."

The national project brings together 17 utility partners, 6 health departments and 10 research organisations involved. The program of work is supported by Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA).

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