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Media Release

Technology in the pipeline

Innovative technology is now being used to take some of the guesswork out of how to prioritise renewal of the pipes in the water reticulation system.

Known as the Pipeline Asset Risk Management System, or PARMS for short, the technology was developed in conjunction with the Water Services Association of Australia, of which TasWater is a member along with major water services organisations across the nation.

Over the next few decades, TasWater must try to keep pace with the inevitable deterioration of an ageing reticulation system that involves a staggering 6,700 kilometres of pipes of varying materials, sizes and construction. In distance terms, that is equivalent to seven return trips on The Spirit of Tasmania between Devonport and Melbourne.

TasWater's Manager Network Asset Performance, Matt Jordan, said it was a huge task needing all the technological help they could get.

"A large proportion of the pipes were laid in the 1960s to the 80's, which means the average age is approximately forty-five years," Mr Jordan said.

"Then you have to consider that the material used to make those pipes ranges from plastic, cement to cast iron. Obviously, some have stood the test of time better than others.

"PARMS allows us to understand the various factors that contribute to the deterioration of the pipes and how well they are likely to stand the test of time, so we can prioritise what sections of pipe to address first."

This situation is not peculiar to Tasmania. It is common around the world.

Today, over 90 per cent of replacement pipes are made of either PVC or polyethylene which ensures a serviceable lifespan of at least 80 years.

Mr Jordan said there were two key problems associated with ageing pipelines.

"The first is the increase in pipe bursts and the loss of valuable water as well as the resultant inconvenience to industry and commerce as well as households," he said.

"The second is to try to ensure that pipes are regularly maintained by flushing to reduce any build-up of residues that may potentially lower water quality."

TasWater took responsibility for Tasmania's ageing water reticulation system when the organisation was formed eight years ago.

"Progressively replacing the system over the next 25 years or so is a massive task involving significant investment," Mr Jordan said.



“That’s why we are taking advantage of new technology to ensure the replacement program is as efficient and cost-effective as possible, so our customers can have reliable, high quality water all the time.”

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