

Nubian plans for dry future

PUBLISHED: 10 Sep 2011 PRINT EDITION: 10 Sep 2011



Nubian Water Systems chief executive Barry Porter. **Photo: Nic Walker**

Jason Clout

Nubian Water Systems' name may come from the past, but it is every bit a company for the future.

Chief executive Barry Porter says water has been one of the more ignored environmental issues yet ranks among the most important.

"There has been a lot of talk about energy, of course, which there should be. But we think it is vital when it comes to sustainability that we change the way we deal with water."

Nubian, owned by Latitude Investments, uses technology to recycle and purify water. It's intellectual property was originally conceived by a backyard inventor.

The capacity of the technology was recognised by Nubian, which now holds all the patents.

"One of the benefits of the Nubian approach to water is that our systems have little negative impact on the environment, such as there is a low power requirement to run the devices," Porter says.

Prices for the units vary depending on the size of the system, as Nubian services both domestic and commercial markets. A 1000-litre system for the home may cost about \$10,000, but bigger units can run into hundreds of thousands of dollars.

However, the challenge for communities is that quality water may become more scarce, he says. Mr Porter points to a United Nations World Water Development report, which suggests the amount of water available to everyone will decrease 30 per cent by 2023.

A few years later, the Water Services Association of Australia predicts an additional 600 billion litres will be needed in the country's major cities and towns, Porter says.

With water treatment a global issue, the company has hopes for increased export income, which would help it grow from its current revenue of \$2 million. An advantage in the pursuit of overseas markets is that Australian water standards are well regarded in many parts of the world, such as the Middle East.

But Porter says that does not mean there aren't significant regulatory issues that have to be faced here and abroad. He explains there are two elements to water standards. There are what the industry calls quality parameters, which broadly relate to the water's colour, odour, taste and contents. The other element is what treated water can be used for in the home and the office.

The so-called "grey water" produced by Nubian's purification systems may be used in the garden or for washing cars.

"But it's not for drinking or use in the kitchen," Porter says.

Complications arise in Australia because the allowed applications for treated water vary between states, he

says.

Nubian has also been involved with Swim Australia and the swimming pool industry.

One of the aims of the association has been to reduce the quantity of chemicals used in pools.

The chief executive of Swim Australia, Ross Gage, says there is a trend for swimming pool users to want fewer chemicals in their water.

But from the industry's point of view any change has to be cost-effective. The association hired a consultant to explore the problem. Their recommendation for treating and monitoring water quality in the pools turned out to be a Nubian product.

A benefit of the installed swimming pool system is the specialised chlorine analysers. Nubian claims those are more accurate than traditional ways of testing for chlorine.

That should cut spending on chemicals for users and provide better-quality water.

The company has also introduced features that should reduce the time spent monitoring swimming pools, such as a remote management system.

Gage says that has enabled users to control the system from off-site. An iPhone app is available.

Porter says the unusual name of the business comes from two distinct but related sources, both tied to the ancient Nubian people of Africa.

"In order to irrigate the fields and farm the land above the Nile, the Nubians built large water wheels to haul water up from the river.

"They also inspired the naming of the Nubian Sandstone Aquifer System, which is located underground in the eastern end of the Sahara. It is the world's largest known fossil water aquifer system."

The Australian Financial Review

Related News

Topics [Environment](#), [Company News](#), [Consumer Goods & Services/Food & Drink](#)



Create an alert

Click on the links below to create an alert and receive the latest news as it happens

Topics [Environment](#), [Company News](#), [Consumer Goods & Services/Food & Drink](#)