

Dollars from Dirty Water

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To produce coal seam gas, companies must extract and dispose of large amounts of saline, and sometimes quite toxic, underground water. The Queensland government has ordered CSG producers to cease simply dumping water into large evaporation ponds. They must find less environmentally damaging and more useful disposal methods for the water and clean up existing evaporation ponds within three years. This water could be purified for stock watering, irrigation, forestry or even town water supplies.

According to water engineer Vaughan Pearce, of the water planning and design division of engineers MWH, the best solution would be to pipe the water to a small number of centrally located purification plants for processing different grades of water.