

Savings flow in Hills water loop

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SA Water's David Eggers, Thomas Foods International CEO Darren Thomas and Woodside farmer Edward Ringwood.

RECYCLED water from an abattoir is helping an Adelaide Hills farmer grow fodder for his lamb, resulting in significant benefits and savings all around.

SA Water has increased the wastewater treatment volume at its Bird in Hand Plant by creating an "ongoing loop" between Lobethal abattoir owner Thomas Foods International and Woodside farmer and TFI lamb supplier Edward Ringwood.

The solution has helped TFI avoid the cost of setting up additional on-site treatment infrastructure while Mr Ringwood has secured a new 160 megalitre-a-year supply of recycled

water, which has enabled the expansion of his breeding stock.

The solution's design came after a fire at TFI's Murray Bridge facility led to it shifting a large amount of production to its Lobethal base, increasing the processing waste the firm was discharging into SA Water's local sewerage network.

"We were faced with investing hundreds of thousands of dollars in capital to upgrade our Lobethal plant's trade waste pre-treatment to ensure we continued to meet our compliance obligations," TFI chief executive Darren Thomas said.

In a time of economic uncertainty, pursuing opportunities that delivered notable savings further positioned the company for growth, Mr Thomas said.

"Our ability to sustain a successful business is influenced by creating efficiencies, and in this instance, SA Water formulated a clever solution," he said. A pipeline from the facility's network was constructed to Mr Ringwood's property, connecting the farm's new irrigation infrastructure to a supply of recycled water.

Mr Ringwood, who has worked his Woodside property for 10 years, said water availability in primary production was paramount.

"Having a reliable climate-independent water source has drought-proofed our property," he said.

"We're now able to grow more pasture all year round, providing certainty in our capacity to breed lambs to a heavier weight, increasing our profitability."

The recycled water is helping irrigate 20 hectares through an internal network of pipes that are about 3000m long.

"Increased reuse from SA Water's treatment plant reduced the Bird in Hand facility's operational expenses and may potentially defer an upcoming capital project," SA Water's general manager customer delivery Kerry Rowlands said.

"Large processors of meat, dairy and fresh produce are required to remove high-strength organic material from their wastewater before discharging it into our network, where it is then further treated for recycling or safe release back to the environment.

"We knew if we could find new recycled water customers who valued the types of nutrients present in this wastewater, we could help Thomas Foods avoid

significant capital cost.”