



MEDIA RELEASE

A close up on compost

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A team of Gippsland Water operators have a new appreciation for the product they work with every day, thanks to some in-depth training.

Soil and Organic Recycling Facility (SORF) staff were recently taken through a masterclass in how to make top quality compost. Businesses in Gippsland and as far away as Melbourne send prescribed solid and liquid waste to the SORF, reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill.

After treatment various quantities of these wastes are recycled by being combined to create compost. Prescribed wastes are composted via in vessel units, where air is forced through the mixture to maintain aerobic conditions and speed up the process. Non-prescribed wastes are composted via wind row composting.

The SORF team spent three days with trainers from Soil Foodweb Institute setting up and monitoring tests and learning how to identify various types of fungi and bacteria under a microscope, including amoebae, flagellates, ciliate and protozoa.

“The challenge we have at the SORF is that the source (food) for creating compost varies. It all depends on the soils and liquids being disposed of at the SORF, which affects our ability to make compost of a consistent standard,” Gippsland Water managing director David Mawer said.

The team was taught how to analyse the quality of compost they’ve made by observing what micro-organisms are living in it. This can also indicate whether the compost is aerobic or anaerobic. The generation of heat is an important part of creating compost, as it kills pathogens and weed seeds.

“Our compost is quite dry, so we’re hoping to get some tips on how to keep some moisture in it, as the bacteria and fungi live within the water on the surface of solid particles.

“Once the compost comes out of the in-vessel units it stays on the maturation pad for at least eight weeks. We turn it throughout these weeks, as it still has heat in it. After this time, the compost is moved to the bottom of the SORF site when the process is complete,” Mr Mawer said.

The training in the biology and chemistry of compost was conducted by Soil Foodweb Institute. The organisation will also help the SORF team conduct a 12-18 month research and development project. The project will help Gippsland Water better understand its compost ingredients and tailor recipes to promote better biology in the blends, resulting in a superior compost.

The first trials of the SORF compost’s impact on soil quality, soil health and crop yield commenced earlier this year, with 4,800 tonnes of two types of compost spread on crop and pasture paddocks at Gippsland Water’s farm at Dutson Downs.

P.T.O.



Caption: (l-r) Jack Waterman and Merline Olson of the Soil Foodweb Institute are pictured with the Soil and Organic Recycling Facility's Mark Samblebe during the training course.

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