

SOVEREIGN HILL

ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW



Today, as it was in the 1850s, water is at the forefront of the national psyche. Sovereign Hill sees itself as a conduit through which the story of water can be told, linking the lessons of the past with opportunities for a more sustainable future.

In depicting the past, water is integral to Sovereign Hill's function. From maintaining the heritage gardens to running the historic boilers in the Steam Operations area of the quartz mine installations, Sovereign Hill's operational requirements had always placed a heavy demand on mains water. The increasing pressure caused by drought conditions, however, led Sovereign Hill to develop a plan to reduce its reliance on this precious resource. To facilitate its water strategy, Sovereign Hill gained financial support from both State and Federal Governments.

Gardening Strategies

By clustering valuable plants in specific gardens and removing non-essential plants, Sovereign Hill has prioritised its water requirements. Mulching and a focus on improving soil condition have also reduced its reliance on water.

Adapting the Old

Water Collection Tanks

Until 1862, no permanent water catchment existed in Ballarat. During the latter part of the 1850s, many houses had water tanks, which collected rainwater from guttering. Water butts (barrels) were also used to collect water.

With supplementary funding from the Federal Government's Community Water Grants scheme, Sovereign Hill installed 13 water tanks with a total storage capability of 1 million litres to store rainwater catchment from existing rooflines. This reclaimed water is rechanneled into a series of tanks joined by a gravity-fed underground water pipe. Stored water is used for the heritage gardens, steam operations and the large stable of working horses.

Embracing the New

With funding from the Victorian Government's Smart Water Fund, Sovereign Hill embraced new technologies as part of its water-saving strategies.

Sediment Separation

Nothing goes to waste! Storm water from Sovereign Hill's roads and footpaths is no longer lost to drains outside Sovereign Hill or through evaporation. This precious water is channelled into drains that lead to a gross pollutant trap. This trap separates and removes pollutants like mud, gravel and rubbish from the water so it can be stored for further use.

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Reverse Osmosis

Water used in Sovereign Hill's Steam Operations needs to be relatively free of impurities such as calcium, magnesium and silica. If these impurities are left to build up in the boilers, they form a hard scale, which decreases the efficiency of the boilers and increases the volume of water required to operate them. By installing a reverse osmosis system, impurities can be filtered from mains water before it enters the boilers, thereby maintaining optimum efficiency in the steam production process. The water that contains the impurities can then be saved for dust suppression on the roads and for processing gold-bearing quartz in the Battery House. Before the reverse osmosis system was installed, this water was wasted because it could not be recycled without further treatment, and this was beyond Sovereign Hill's means.