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Media release

28 June 2007

Disruptive technologies give unexpected innovations in water management

“New techniques based on developments in bio-and nanotechnologies will provide significant improvements to the everyday management of water supplies”, Environmental Biotechnology CRC Executive Director and President of the International Water Association Dr David Garman said today at the American Water Works Association’s annual conference (ACE 07) in Toronto, Canada.

“Looking outside water industry conventions has led to an improved understanding of water systems and their behaviour. The insights and technologies discovered give us new options for managing the overall water and ecosystem health.”

For example, a biotechnological approach has provided a technique to manage pathogen harbouring persistent bacterial slime known as biofilms. Biofilms are present in pipes and membrane systems and contribute to fouling and corrosion in fluid processes and undesirable taste and odour issues in water.

“Reducing the presence of biofilms significantly increases the efficiency of operations and extends asset life leading to reduced infrastructure replacement costs in water systems such as desalination and water treatment plants”, Dr Garman continued.

“Energy costs are the greatest contributor to high operational costs of such systems. Improving efficiencies will significantly reduce operating costs and lead to a reduced energy consumption and environmental footprint.”

“The new approaches are part of the international trend of seeking unconventional or disruptive technologies based around the emerging areas of biotechnology and nanotechnology”, Dr Garman said.

“The potential is emerging for completely new industries based around these technologies in a multibillion dollar industry base”, Dr Garman concluded.

Environmental Biotechnology CRC is contributing \$10M to its water related research and development projects over the next three years. Projects include biofilm dispersal and control strategies, rapid pathogen detection and improvements in industrial strength wastewater management.

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