



News release

26 July 2007

Fast sludge gets international funding boost

A new 'fast sludge' process using advanced biotechnology will get a major boost from the International Science Linkages fund. The funding will enable Australia's top molecular biologists to link with leading European researchers to advance knowledge of the process.

The aerobic granular sludge process will revolutionise wastewater treatment by increasing the treatment process throughput and eliminating the dewatering process.

Environmental Biotechnology CRC (EBCRC) researchers at the Advanced Wastewater Management Centre are developing a new efficient and reliable technology to remove high levels of nutrients, mainly nitrogen, phosphorus and carbon, from wastewater.

"Wastewater treatment plants based on novel aerobic granular sludge represent a potent innovative alternative, avoiding or minimising the drawbacks of the conventional floccular systems", said Prof. Linda Blackall, linkages program leader.

"The extraordinary settling characteristics of aerobic granular sludge has superior organic carbon conversion capacities and produces 50% less sludge than the traditional systems", Prof Blackall continued.

"Additionally, the aerobic granular process occupies only a quarter of the space of conventional plants and energy consumption is reduced by a third due to lower water pumping requirements and more efficient utilisation of provided dissolved oxygen."

The research funded by EBCRC, the Advanced Wastewater Management Centre and Meat and Livestock Australia has been boosted by a grant from the Department of Education, Science and Training which allows researchers to cooperate with two of the leading international organisations the Istituto di Ricerca Sulle Acque (IRSA, Rome, Italy) and the Technical University Delft (TUD), the Netherlands.

"The opportunity to link with the EU collaborators on this project provides tremendous impetus and capacity for us to quickly become international leaders in this field. The potential for commercialisation of the process and of the diagnostic procedures is high due to the large number of high nutrient containing wastewater generators throughout the world", Prof Blackall concluded.

EBCRC is investing more than \$1.9m in the aerobic granulation project over two and a half years as part of its advanced biotechnology programs for industry.

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