

Goodbye washing powder

By Megan Haggan

FRIENDS Penny Allinson and Cheryl Betts, concerned about the impact of detergents in their grey water, have created an approach to washing that's novel in Australia and environmentally friendly.

"Like most Canberrans, we want to reuse our grey water and reduce our overall water usage," said Cheryl. "But we weren't happy with the 'green' detergents we were using because of the sludge that was left behind in our washing machines.

"I used to have the water in the sink and put it on the garden using a hose – and I could see the sludge building up in the hose like cholesterol in arteries!

"So we did a bit of investigation, we found a manufacturer and the result was Enviroballs."

Enviro Washballs and Enviro Dryerballs are recyclable plastic balls containing small ceramic stones that last for up to 1000 washes. The stones raise the pH level of the wash, allowing water to move through fabric easily to remove dirt.

The balls contain no chemicals or bleaching agents, and have been independently tested in a Canberra laboratory.

"No residue is left on your clothes, so you don't need the rinse cycle," said Penny.

"A top loader uses about 170 litres a wash. Without the rinse cycle, you save thousands of litres of water a year.

"There's also less wear and tear on your



Enviroballs entrepreneurs Cheryl Betts, left, and Penny Allinson.

washing machine and pipes, and clothes last longer because there are no chemicals to break down fabric."

The company launched in the ACT two months ago and Cheryl said that feedback had been overwhelmingly positive.

Putting grey water containing detergents on gardens could damage plants and soil and damage ecosystems if it was allowed to enter waterways.

Penny and Cheryl have both been using the balls in their washers and dryers for the past 18 months.

One of the most commonly asked questions

to date has been whether Enviroballs damage clothing, particularly delicate fabrics.

"Enviroballs are the size of cricket balls, so I can see why people ask!" said Cheryl. "But they're made of soft plastic, so they're safe. I've used it on everything from the delicate cycle to washing big doonas."

Cheryl said it could take two or three washes without washing powder or liquid to remove the residue from clothing.

Enviroballs Australia products including Washballs, \$49.95, and Dryerballs, \$14.95, are available online from www.enviroballs.com.au.

Cycling success

THE Urban Polaris cycling event through Canberra raised \$38,000 that will go to the Mental Health Foundation's Gemini program, which supports people with a mental illness to find and retain work. There were 510 riders from as far afield as SA and Queensland. Gary Scheld won the \$2000 Mongoose Canon Bike. Shaun Lewis and Jason Chalker won the men's category and were first place overall.

Calling for helpers

RED Cross is calling for 4000 volunteers for its Red Cross Calling Appeal in March. Each year Red Cross needs to raise more than \$1.5m to support its work in Canberra. The appeal has a target of \$250,000 during March.

Centenary drop

ASSISTANT wine maker of Brindabella Hills Winery Brian Sinclair (left), owner Roger Harris and Kylie Prescott, of Centenary of Canberra, pictured with a bottle of the special edition



Centenary of Canberra Riesling. The wine has been recently bottled to enable it to be entered in national and international wine challenges in the years leading up to the Centenary of Canberra in 2013. Plans are also under way for a Centenary of Canberra Shiraz, to be blended in early 2009. The wines will be held for release until the centenary year, when limited amounts will be available for public sale.

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