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Water, water everywhere

John Beveridge

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SINCE she has arrived in Australia, Amanda Brock has been run off her feet racing from city to city. The reason is that the company she heads, Water Standard, may have come up with a much more efficient and economical way of desalination.

Rather than using expensive land-based plants such as the one the Victorian Government is planning in Wonthaggi, a large desalination plant is contained on a ship.

That allows for much cheaper desalination for a number of reasons.

The ship is surrounded by sea water so there is no need for extensive inlet and outfall pipe networks.

Clean water can be pumped directly into a city's water supply, saving the energy needed to pump into a reservoir.

The salty outfall can easily be diluted to almost normal levels by mixing it with sea water on the ship before it is released.

And the ship generates its own power, either from gas or new generation diesels.

However, the biggest advantage of ship-based desalination is its mobility, so that the ship can go to where it is needed.

"We are looking to be part of the global, long-term solution to the water crisis," said Amanda. "This is a cost effective solution that has superior environmental credentials and a smaller carbon footprint."

The ship-based system could conceivably move between various Australian cities, going to where the water needs were the greatest at the time.

That compares with Victoria's \$3.1 billion plant that will probably have to produce water every year under a contract -- whether that expensive and energy intensive water is required or not.

Amanda said she had met with many potential Australian customers and was keen to "come back and open an Australian office".

After almost a decade of research and development and many patents, Water Standard has raised more than \$270 million in equity to finalise the concept.

It is preparing to build the first of its ships for delivery to the UAE.

The ship-based plants can make up to 200 megalitres of drinking water a day and would also be ideal to deploy after natural disasters such as droughts, cyclones, tsunamis and earthquakes.

Water Standard is also negotiating with potential clients in the Middle East, China and the US.