

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Turning the lights out on mercury contamination**

With an estimated 99% of fluorescent tubes and bulbs currently being landfilled<sup>1</sup>, concerns continue to be raised that the accumulated mercury they contain could become an environmental contaminant.

SITA Environmental Solutions (SITA) is leading the way to increase resource recovery and help manage this problem through its fluorescent tube collection and recycling service.

SITA's General Manager, Marketing and Communications, Mike Ritchie, says "Landfill and incineration are no longer acceptable means to dispose of fluorescent tubes. Given that the mercury in a single tube can pollute 30,000L of water, there is a clear need for responsible management of this waste stream.

"Mercury and other valuable resources can be safely recovered from used fluorescent tubes and put to new use," said Mr Ritchie.

Some 50-60 million fluorescent tubes are landfilled each year in Australia<sup>2</sup>, which accounts for up to 640kg of mercury in landfill.

In addition to mercury, a number of other, valuable resources are wasted when fluorescent tubes are deposited in landfill. Each year, approximately 12,800 tonnes of glass, 100 tonnes of aluminium and 25 tonnes of steel from fluorescent tubes are landfilled<sup>3</sup>, materials that could – and should – be safely recovered and recycled.

Mr Ritchie congratulated a wide range of companies and organisations for implementing fluorescent tube recycling programs. In particular, one iconic Australian institution has taken a lead in recycling this waste stream. Since 2006, Parliament House in Canberra has engaged SITA to collect and recycle its fluorescent tubes. In this time, a staggering 12,000 tubes have been recycled.

Small and large businesses across Australia continue to take up the challenge to recycle their fluorescent tubes and across a three month period in 2007 SITA recycled 30,000 fluorescent tubes in NSW alone, diverting 323g of mercury from landfill.

SITA provides businesses with specially marked cardboard boxes which can contain up to 100 used fluorescent tubes. The tubes are then safely collected and delivered to 'CMA EcoCycle' for recycling. The facilities at CMA EcoCycle operate under an EPA license, ensuring the production of safe, environmentally-sound by-products. This includes dental amalgams (using mercury), foundry products (using aluminium), fertilisers (using phosphor powder) and insulation (using glass).

For more information on how you can recycle your fluorescent tubes call 13 13 35 or visit [sita.com.au](http://sita.com.au)

*SITA Environmental Solutions, a SUEZ Environment subsidiary, provides weekly services to over 43,000 commercial and industrial clients and more than 800,000 households across Australia*

*SITA's services include domestic, commercial & industrial waste collection; waste assessments; resource recovery and recycling options; processing of organic materials into compost; renewable energy facilities; hygiene services; waste treatment; and product destruction.*

*More information on SITA's services can be obtained by calling 13 13 35 or visit [www.sita.com.au](http://www.sita.com.au)*

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<sup>1</sup> WME May 2007

<sup>2</sup> Universal Metals Pty Ltd, 2006 *Mercury contamination of Australia's landfills and trade waste water.*

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.