

Slushies like 'crack cocaine'

JANELLE MILES

CHEAP frozen sugary drinks which are as addictive and bad for your health have been compared with crack cocaine.

Outraged Queensland Health Minister Steven Miles has put the food and beverage industry on notice, telling a national obesity summit that companies need to stop blaming individuals for being fat.

He said they needed to do more to address Australia's growing obesity crisis or face further regulation.

"You have flooded our suburbs with dollar frozen drinks," he said. "Within 500 metres of my house, there are three outlets selling dollar frozen drinks."

"One has 37 different flavours. This is literally the sugar equivalent of flooding our suburbs with crack cocaine."

Mr Miles, who has made tackling obesity a priority, called for a comprehensive national obesity policy.

"While I accept that we all have some responsibility for our own health, I don't see any evidence at all that in recent decades waves of people have woken up and decided to be fat," he said. "Our society is doing that to them."

Mr Miles said food and beverage industry representatives were exploiting people for profit.



Naturally clean: Amaya, 6, and her brother Arlo Ehelepola, 5, enjoy a dip in their naturally cleaned pool. Picture: Ross Swanborough

JOSH ZIMMERMAN

CHLORINE and creepy crawlies are out — unless frogs and fish are your thing — as freshwater swimming pools emulating natural lakes gain in popularity across Perth.

Free of the additives traditionally found in backyard pools, natural pools have long been popular in Europe, because they don't irritate the skin or eyes and are cheaper to maintain once installed.

Instead, the chemicals are replaced by natural vegetation, which provides filtration and, if desired, an array of marine life, including fish, frogs and even turtles.

Dulana (Dean) Herath, director of PASES Aqua, is one of a handful of Perth residents who have already installed an oasis in their backyard.

"We've got four other natural pools across the city in progress at the moment," Dr Herath said. "Demand is not huge at this stage, but it is growing."

"One of the reasons it has taken a while to take off in Australia is because the warmer temperatures here mean we require a combination of natural and artificial filtration."

"In Europe, where it is a lot cooler, the algae doesn't multiply nearly as fast."

The details of PASES Aqua's combined filtration system are a closely guarded secret, but owners have the choice of including certain fish and frog species that graze on algae.

"The client might want none of that stuff and that is fine, but most people choose to include them because they enjoy swimming with wildlife," Dr Herath said.

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Big spend on media monitoring

TAXPAYERS FORK OUT \$22,000 A DAY

EXCLUSIVE ANNIKA SMETHURST

TAXPAYERS have forked out more than \$8 million to monitor what the media is saying about the Federal Government, new documents show.

Government documents reveal more than \$22,000 a day was spent on media monitoring services by 18 Federal Government departments and agencies in the 2017-18 financial year.

But the total amount could be much higher, with the Departments of Defence, Health and Human Services failing to meet the reporting deadline.

The Attorney-General's Department spent almost \$1 million dollars on media monitoring services, including \$47,000 to find out what was being said about the minister, Christian Porter, and his department. Another \$479,518 was spent monitoring what journalists were saying about three royal commissions, including \$109,000 to keep track of news

reports about the banking royal commission.

Peter Dutton's super ministry, the Department of Home Affairs, spent \$811,629 — \$15,000 each week — to find out what had been said about the department in the newspaper, on TV and radio.

This Government ... now has to pay millions just to know what their own colleagues are saying.

Media monitoring services collate print articles, TV and radio reports for government staff and can also include scanning social media for mentions.

In 2017-18, the Department of Jobs and Small Business spent more than \$500,000 monitoring what was said about

the minister, Kelly O'Dwyer, and the department, including almost \$19,000 to find out what was being said on Twitter and Facebook.

NBN Co, the embattled company rolling out Australia's national broadband network, spent \$266,904 monitoring media, while more than \$300,000 in taxpayer's cash was forked out by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Labor's Matt Keogh said the multimillion-dollar spend was proof the government is "obsessed with itself".

"This Government is so far out of touch with each other and the Australian people it now has to pay millions just to know what their own colleagues are saying in the media," he said.

Finance Minister Mathias Cormann defended the monitoring bill, saying the Government imposed a \$43.3 million cut on the communication budgets of all government agencies in its first budget. He said overall departmental expenditure continued to fall.