Aim:
The ‘Water Only Schools’ Program aims to improve the health of children within the Goulburn Valley region through supporting schools to inform their staff, students and community about practices that reduce health risks for children.

Goulburn Valley Water, in partnership with local health organisations, are encouraging schools to become ‘Water Only’ by:

- Ensuring drinking water is available to students at all times
- Not allowing students to bring sweet drinks onto school grounds
- Not allowing students to purchase sweet drinks through lunch orders/canteens
- Ensuring staff model the ideal behaviour by not bringing sweet drinks on to the school grounds

Exceptions include:

- Four days permitted as exceptions for the school year. This allows for special occasions and shows students that sugary drinks are just ‘sometimes’ drinks
- On school excursions or camps if the program is not convenient

Purpose:
The availability of sugary drinks at school, either in lunch boxes, the school canteen, lunch orders or vending machines, sends a message to children that they are suitable drinks. By banning them at school, it conveys a healthy message to children and this message has the potential to affect community attitudes. The purpose of this program is to encourage staff, students and their families to make smart choices about what they drink for the following reasons:

1. Health
   A. Why sugary drinks are ‘sometimes’ drinks?
      - Australians are very high consumers of sugary drinks. These drinks are the largest source of sugar in the Australian diet, with consumption highest in adolescents and children.
      - The consumption of sugary drinks is associated with an increased risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, weight gain and obesity, which can result in numerous health complications.
      - Sugary drinks are associated with tooth decay in children. This is due to the acidity of such drinks, as well as the bacterial fermentation that can occur with the consumption of sugar.
      - Soft drink consumption could increase the risk of reduced bone strength.

   B. Why do students need to stay hydrated?
      - Mild dehydration can cause symptoms that affect a student’s ability to learn, including headaches, tiredness, irritability, and a lack of concentration.
2. Economic
   - Tap water is value for money in comparison to sugary drinks (and bottled water).
   - For the same price as a $2 drink from the shop Goulburn Valley Water customers can get approximately 6800 cups of tap water.

3. Environmentally
   - Drinking tap water over packaged drinks is more environmentally friendly.
   - A large amount of energy and water is required for the production of sugary drinks and bottled water and their packaging, transport and refrigeration. It can take up to 3 litres of water to produce 1 litre of bottled water.\(^1\) Energy is also required for the recycling/disposal process of empty packaging.
   - Over 50% of plastic bottles end up as landfill or litter.\(^1\)
   - In landfill, bottles can take up to 1000 years to break down.\(^2\)

School Benefits:

There are multiple benefits for schools that participate in the ‘Water Only Schools’ program. These include:

- Schools are provided with a sign to be placed on the fence, informing the community that the school is a ‘Water Only’ school.
- A launch event is held for the unveiling of the sign. This event includes:
  - Student rotational activities such as a mock demonstration of making a can of cola
  - A drink bottle and other giveaways provided to each student and staff member
  - Media coverage
- Goulburn Valley Water staff on hand to support the school with their campaign, providing information for students, families and staff, and other resources.
- Recognition for the school for promoting the importance of a healthy lifestyle for students and their families.

To sign up to the ‘Water Only Schools’ program or to seek additional information, contact:

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*Please note: this program is only available for schools serviced by Goulburn Valley Water

References
1) Choose Tap
2) https://thewaterproject.org/bottled-water/bottled_water_wasteful