

## New water fountains another fan-friendly move at Etihad



**Jesse Hogan**

Etihad Stadium has welcomed the support of its caterer, Delaware North, over the installation of chilled water fountains inside the venue that will likely cut sales of bottled water.

The venue on Wednesday unveiled a partnership with VicHealth and Melbourne's water retailers that culminated in the 10 fountains being installed for patrons at all sporting and entertainment events to use at no charge.

"We all complain about petrol prices but we spend endless money on water. It doesn't make sense," said Hawthorn stalwart Sam Mitchell, a campaign ambassador.

While the move before the season by Delaware North to cut the prices of some of its food, after MCG caterer Spotless had done so, reduced its profit margin, the installation of water fountains on concourses within the stadium could potentially have a bigger effect if patrons choose to shun purchases of bottled water, an increasingly popular beverage for retailers.

Etihad Stadium chief executive Paul Sergeant said the addition of the fountains would help the stadium "keep up with the times". He praised Delaware North for being "very much willing partners" despite the likely financial detriment of it, and hoped it would increase patrons' willingness to regularly attend events at the venue.

"Better to be in that position [of selling fewer bottles of water] than not having people come at all," Sergeant said.

"People sometimes think we're a bit strange ... I actually would like to think we're a bit forward-thinking. If we earn a bit less, that's life."

Sergeant said the water fountain decision was in keeping with its change of policy to allow patrons to bring in food purchased from restaurants surrounding Etihad Stadium, because he would "hate to see the places outside boarded up".

"Are they taking money people might spend with us? Probably ... but you've really got to look at the bigger picture. If they're doing well because we're doing well, fantastic," Sergeant said.