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Recycled water scheme to expand as population grows

The Fraser Coast recycled water scheme will expand to cater for population growth, while infrastructure improvements will cut almost \$12 million from the capital expenditure budget over the next decade.

The expansion of the award-winning effluent re-use scheme is the focus of the Recycled Water Strategy adopted by the Fraser Coast Regional Council today (Wednesday, February 22).

“Our aim is to have most of the effluent created on the Fraser Coast used in some type of agriculture ranging from sugar cane to hardwood plantations,” Cr David Lee said.

“We’d only think about discharging to the ocean in very wet years, and even then, we’d be aiming to minimise the amount.”

During the development of the strategy, Council was able to pinpoint savings.

“The Strategy identifies that infrastructure optimisation over the 30-year life of the plan will allow for a reduction in capital expenditure in the 10-year plan from \$33.4M to \$21.8M for recycled water infrastructure projects,” Cr Lee said.

The Fraser Coast recycled water scheme started in 1990 in Hervey Bay, followed by Maryborough in 2003.

Currently Fraser coast residents use about 9,000ML per year of potable water, of which about 5,000ML is recycled for a variety of agricultural and community purposes such as irrigating sporting fields.

Key recommendations and findings of the Strategy include:

- The community highly values Council’s recycled water activities from resource and environmental management perspectives.
- Existing recycled water customers highly value access to this resource for irrigation of agriculture and sporting facilities.
- Economic analysis indicates a favourable cost-benefit to the community by avoided cost of Sewage Treatment Plant upgrades.
- Environmental sustainability reviews indicate recycled water use is sustainable, however salinity requires ongoing management.
- Continuation of Council-owned forestry will be required to manage recycled water during low third-party demand periods.

Key infrastructure requirements identified in the Strategy include:

- Expansion of the Hervey Bay Recycled Water network on Vanderwolf Road, followed by further expansion across Susan River or west to Stock Yard Creek area (Takura) in 2036, including an additional 1,425 ML storage.
- Expansion of the Maryborough Recycled Water network in a westerly direction, including an additional 300ML storage.
- Continue existing project to connect Recycled Water to Council owned land on Beelbi Creek Road and establish irrigation areas.
- Continue existing project at Howard to establish new irrigation areas in conjunction with new Sewage Treatment Plant.

ENDS