

Media Release



AGNES WATER/SEVENTEEN SEVENTY INTEGRATED SEWERAGE AND WATER PROJECT GETS GO AHEAD FROM NEW COUNCIL 2 JULY 2008

Gladstone Regional Council will proceed with a scaled-down version of the integrated sewerage and water project approved by the former Miriam Vale Shire Council, after satisfying itself that it is the only immediately viable option for meeting the needs of Agnes Water and Seventeen Seventy residents.

Speaking after Council's meeting yesterday, Mayor George Creed said Council had considered a number of alternatives and had sought the State Government's approval with respect to important funding eligibility before arriving at a decision.

"We have looked at water supply alternatives such as pipelines, bores and dams and none really stacked up for us like this project has – particularly given that it provides a sewerage solution also."

We certainly didn't intend pursuing any form of interference in Baffle Creek and there were too many unknowns with some of the pipeline proposals. Even if these things were attractive to us, we still had to fix the sewerage problem," Cr Creed said.

"In the end, we simply weren't prepared to pass up all the necessary approvals and substantial Government funding already committed to this project."

"Thankfully, our contractor has been very understanding and accommodating of our needs. Their willingness to work with us on some scope reduction proposals has meant we can still deliver the sewerage and water results and keep the project affordable," Cr Creed said.

Cr Creed acknowledged the difficulty the new Council had in arriving at its decision.

"We know that this project has met with some opposition and that there are residents not in favour of it going ahead. All I can ask is that those people seek to understand that a lot of work has gone into this project over a number of years and that it really is the best option available to us at this time."

"We had to make a decision that we felt was in the best interests of current and future generations," he said.

Mayor Creed confirmed that an extensive community awareness campaign was now underway to improve the local community's level of understanding of the project, particularly in relation to the desalination plant.

"As a group of Councillors, we would have much preferred to have spent more time talking to people about solutions to these problems. The reality is though, we were legally bound to use our best endeavours to see that the contract signed by Miriam Vale Shire Council was honoured."

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A lot of work has gone on in the past couple of months to review three years' worth of planning and decision-making. But, we still only learned the final position of the State Government yesterday - the day after we were required to notify the contractor whether or not we would proceed."

"It is incredibly difficult to have any form of meaningful consultation process when we didn't know what our options were, or what leniency the Government might give us with respect to project scope and funding."

"We hope people will understand this is not the way we would normally do business," Cr Creed said.

Cr Creed also wanted to reinforce to people across the region that the project would be solely funded by the consumers of the new service.

"This project has been designed and costed on the basis that it is self-funding and that consumers will not pay anymore than their current water charges, plus an annual CPI adjustment. There will not be any cross-subsidy from other ratepayers not on the scheme."

"Even with this decision made, we still intend developing an overall regional water supply solution for the whole of the southern part of the new region, including places like Bororen, Miriam Vale, Turkey Beach and Hummock Hill Island."

A brief information evening has been organised for **6.00pm on Thursday 3 July 2008 at Sandcastles** to enable Councillors to explain in a little more detail about the decision-making process they have been through recently.

Separately, an information leaflet is being produced and mailed to all residents in the scheme area.

A more extensive public information session is being planned once the mailed information has been sent to residents.

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