

5.5. REEF COUNCILS MAJOR INTEGRATED PROJECTS

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RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- **Endorses the Reef Council Major Integrated Projects proposal as a prospectus for seeking external investment in priority collaborative actions by Queensland Reef region councils; and**
- **Resolves to allow the Local Government Association of Queensland to include its logo for the publication and promotion of the Reef Councils Major Integrated Projects.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Local Government Association of Queensland's (LGAQ) Reef Council Major Integrated Projects (MIP) initiative recognises the importance of local governments' ongoing role in protecting the Great Barrier Reef (GBR). The MIP focuses on improving water quality entering the GBR through the three (3) proposed initiatives, which are:

1. Wastewater Stewardship;
2. Fish Friendly Councils; and
3. Best Practice Erosion & Sediment Control for Unsealed Roads.

BACKGROUND

In May 2016 the Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce issued a series of recommendations to the Queensland Government to improve the quality of the GBR. Recommendation eight related to implementing two MIPs in pollution 'hot spots' to reduce nutrient, sediment and pesticide loads in the GBR catchment. In mid-2017 the Queensland Government rolled out two MIPs focusing on cane and banana agricultural areas in the Wet Tropics region (delivered by Terrain NRM) and graziers in the Burdekin region (delivered by NQ Dry Tropics).

In early 2018 the LGAQ approached councils located within the GBR catchment area through the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Reef Guardians program, to build on the MIP concept and create the Reef Council MIP. Council officers attended two Reef Council MIP development workshops hosted by LGAQ in April and November 2018.

COMMENT

Review Attachment One: Reef Councils MIP Proposal

PROPOSAL

That Council:

- Endorses the Reef Council Major Integrated Projects proposal as a prospectus for seeking external investment in priority collaborative actions by Queensland Reef region councils; and
- Resolves to allow the Local Government Association of Queensland to include its logo for the publication and promotion of the Reef Councils Major Integrated Projects.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no funding or resource requirements at this time. If in the future Council resolves to participate in one or more of the initiatives it will be required to contribute up to 30% of the cost of projects located within the Douglas Shire. This contribution can take the form of funding or in-kind support.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic: None at this time.

Environmental: The MIPs aim to achieve positive GBR water quality outcomes, contributing to important aspects of the Reef 2050 Plan and the Reef 2050 Water Quality Implementation Plan 2017-2022.

Social: The initiative aims to build a sense of responsibility and ownership of roles in improving water quality and protecting GBR health across local government and the wider community.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2014-2019 Initiatives:

Theme 3 - Improve Environmental Performance

3.2.3 - Investigate process improvements at Council's wastewater treatment plants to improve wastewater quality, save energy and identify markets for end products.

Theme 4 - Engage, Plan, Partner

4.2.3 - Work with regional, state, national and international stakeholders to promote beneficial partnerships to support strong, resilient and sustainable communities.

Operational Plan 2018-2019 Actions:

3.1.7 - Support the Shire's environmental sustainability credentials through recognised accreditation programs.

COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

Part-Funder Sharing the cost of a program or activity with other organisations.

CONSULTATION

Internal: Sustainable Communities, Water and Wastewater, Infrastructure

External: LGAQ, Reef Guardian network

ATTACHMENTS

1. Reef Councils MIP Proposal **[5.5.1]**

Reef Councils Major Integrated Projects Proposal

PURPOSE

The summary information contained within this brief is for council purposes as it deems appropriate and has been prepared at the request of the Reef Guardian Councils Steering Committee.

BACKGROUND

Collectively, councils in the Reef catchment already make a significant contribution to the conservation and resilience of the Great Barrier Reef. The investment in 2014/15 by just 15 councils out of 32 was estimated at between \$228 and \$600 million per annum.

However, there are always opportunities to extend and improve on the good work being done and it was agreed by councils attending the first Reef Councils Roundtable in 2016, that a set of prioritised projects should be developed.

WHAT IS A MAJOR INTEGRATED PROJECT (MIP)?

The concept of a MIP was defined by the Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce (GBRWST) as a mechanism to integrate and evaluate the combined effectiveness of a range of tools and innovative approaches, identify the most effective initiatives, scale up implementation to other areas and deliver accelerated progress towards the water quality targets.

A MIP is a platform for piloting and testing new approaches and innovative techniques and technologies.

Two MIPs have been funded to date – the Wet Tropics and Dry Tropics MIPs – with funding of approximately \$16 million each over 3 years.

HOW WAS THE REEF COUNCIL MIP CREATED?

The LGAQ engaged Huelin Consulting earlier this year to facilitate the development of a Reef Councils Major Integrated Projects proposal. The LGAQ wrote to all Reef catchment local government mayors and CEOs requesting the nomination of a working group representative to participate in the development process. Twenty-four officers, managers, CEOs and elected members from 16 local governments worked with key stakeholders from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Office of the Great Barrier Reef, *qldwater*, Department of Environment and Science, Regional NRM groups and Healthy Land and Water in a ground up process to identify and prioritise potential initiatives.

Mayors, councillors, and CEOs from 10 Reef councils provided input on the long list of proposals and technical working groups of council and stakeholder representatives worked with the LGAQ and Huelin Consulting to prepare the final three initiatives.

The Draft Reef Councils Major Integrated Projects proposal was circulated to all 32 Reef councils for a final consultation round, with no major changes proposed.

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WHAT IS THE REEF COUNCILS MIP?

The MIP delivers to following:

- agreed definition for excellence in areas significant to achieving positive water quality outcomes;
- clearly identified pathways (projects) to achieve these standards; and
- scoping of levels of investment and resourcing required.

The three key initiatives have been aligned with actions in the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan and deliver multiple other outcomes toward actions in the Reef 2050 Plan.

The MIP proposes a minimum 70:30 split between external investment and local government contribution, including where councils' contribution may be solely in-kind.

It also identifies the need for two funded coordinators to drive the cross catchment and council collaboration and implementation of funded projects.

SUMMARY OF INITIATIVES

1. Wastewater Stewardship

The challenge:

- 100+ council owned sewerage treatment plants (STPs) in the Reef's catchments;
- increased nutrient removal usually directly linked to higher cost and greater energy use;
- upgrade of plants within 50km of coast to tertiary = ~ \$719 million and ~\$33 million maintenance costs p.a.; and
- cost for STPs in smaller councils disproportionately higher - no economies of scale, smaller rate base - least able to afford.

The initiative will:

- consider STP discharge from a local and whole of catchment perspective;
- prioritise sites to test and trial, innovative, pollutant mitigation approaches;
- create a rigorous framework for testing alternatives to traditional STP upgrades;
- engage with and increase awareness of local communities;
- provide a decision-making structure to balance costs, risks and benefits;
- inform and amend policy and regulation; and
- fund delivery of the right wastewater management strategy for the location.

2. Fish Friendly Councils (community and industry)

The challenge:

- thousands of barriers to fish passage in the landscape, ultimately impacting on quality and quantity of recreational fishing stocks;
- to the community and industry, water quality policy and regulation is disconnected from the benefits it delivers – viewed as ‘bureaucracy’; and
- technical and design solutions for stormwater management not designed for areas outside of SEQ – councils lumped with maintenance of poorly functioning ‘solutions’.
- The initiative will:
- identify and prioritise fish barriers for removal in participating council’s catchments;
- create a ‘Fish Friendly’ brand, marketing campaign and comms resources;
- enlist community and industry ambassadors to promote what it means to be ‘Fish Friendly’;
- roll out fish friendly habitats projects; and
- generate locally appropriate storm water management solutions, with local designers and industry and provide training for ongoing maintenance.

3. Best practice erosion and sediment control for unsealed roads

The challenge:

- local government manages thousands of kilometres of unsealed road in Reef catchment, representing significant areas of exposed earth;
- unsealed pavements may lose up to 25mm of pavement material per year;
- these contribute to gully erosion and increased sediment loads in waterways;
- multiplied by the lineal kilometres of unsealed roads that report to the GBR the sediment contribution may be significant;
- many will remain unsealed for the long term; and
- more frequent intense and extreme weather events associated with climate change will increase loads to the Reef.

The initiative will:

- establish baseline monitoring in critical areas;
- create a suite of impact management and best practice measures;
- develop a decision/support tool and guidance for Reef water quality consideration in road upgrades, including cost benefit analysis;
- test and match solutions to conditions;
- build local government staff capacity to evaluate and apply; and
- undertake impact management projects.

FUNDING

It is anticipated that funding for the initiatives will come from a range of external sources, including the Queensland and Federal governments (direct and grants from aligned areas), the Great Barrier Reef Foundation and philanthropic and industry investment.

The MIP is designed with an initial three-year core stage to trial new approaches and refine and develop capacity (\$13.042 million) followed by a four-year accelerated implementation program (\$44.603 million) at a total cost of \$57.645 million over 7 years. A breakdown of the funding for each initiative is shown in the table below.

Activity	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Core Stage Total	Years 4-7	TOTAL
Wastewater Stewardship	\$253,000	\$833,000	\$2,613,000	\$3,699,000	\$20,432,000	\$24,131,000
Fish Friendly	\$796,000	\$1,346,000	\$1,666,000	\$3,808,000	\$3,464,000	\$7,272,000
Unsealed Roads ESC	\$753,000	\$398,000	\$4,243,000	\$5,394,000	\$20,507,000	\$25,901,000
Program costs	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$150,000	\$200,000	\$350,000
TOTALS	\$1,852,000	\$2,618,000	\$8,572,000	\$13,042,000	\$44,603,000	\$57,645,000

RECOMMENDATION

That council:

1. endorses the Reef Councils MIP proposal as a prospectus for seeking external investment in priority collaborative actions by Queensland Reef region councils; and
2. resolves to allow the LGAQ to include its logo for the publication and promotion of the Reef Councils MIP.