

Question on Notice
No. 1488
Asked on Wednesday 29 November 2006

MS JARRATT asked the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport (MR FRASER)—

QUESTION:

What contribution is the Department of Local Government and Planning making to protect water quality in the Great Barrier Reef Lagoon?

ANSWER:

Since 1998 the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation has committed substantial subsidy assistance of approximately \$132 million to Councils bordering the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park toward the upgrade of sewage treatment plants and effluent reuse schemes. These projects will enhance river health throughout the Great Barrier Reef catchments and achieve significant improvement in the quality of water entering to the lagoon.

For example, I recently visited the Whitsunday Shire in particular the Shutehaven / Shute Harbour Sewerage Scheme project, which has received State government funding of \$2,585,800 towards the estimated cost of \$5,070,000. The project aims to develop and construct a sewerage scheme to replace individual onsite systems in the Shute Harbour and Shutehaven area. The scheme will transport the sewage to the Jubilee Pocket Treatment Plant to avoid construction of a new sewerage outfall into Shutehaven and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

I also recently announced final approval of subsidy of \$8,869,400 towards the Bucasia Waste Water Treatment Plant Upgrade estimated to cost \$21,746,000. The current plant is at capacity and increasing the capacity of the plant will cope with the expected population growth until 2020.

A third example is my recent approval of a subsidy of up to \$43,340,000 for the Mackay Effluent Reuse and Water Recycling Scheme, which has a total project cost of \$130,022,369. This project will result in the decommissioning of the existing Mount Bassett Sewage Treatment Plant and diversion of the sewerage to an augmented sewage treatment plant at Bakers Creek. The highly treated effluent produced by the sewage treatment plant will be used in the irrigation of sugarcane.

The Mackay project is an excellent example of the environmental benefits of these projects. The scheme will result in a significant reduction of the amount of effluent contaminating the Great Barrier Reef due to the reuse of effluent, and the effluent that does enter into the lagoon will have lower nitrogen and phosphorous levels due to the improved treatment process. Secondly, the reuse of effluent for irrigation will have a positive impact on the region's water table and salinity problems caused by water extraction for irrigation purposes.