



## Port Hinchinbrook Sewerage

Thank you for taking the time to consider the current situation of the sewerage service at Port Hinchinbrook. Appropriate management of sewerage is an essential service that is needed to ensure the ongoing public health of the community and the environment.

Until recently a temporary funding agreement was in place with the Department of State Development Tourism and Innovation (DSDTI), for the Cassowary Coast Regional Council to undertake monitoring and maintenance works on a short term basis to keep the STP and the associated pump stations in the reticulation network operational. The sewerage treatment facility and all associated infrastructure continues to be owned by The Passage Holdings Pty Ltd (in liquidation).

In late 2019, DSDTI, with Council support, engaged Gardiner to undertake an assessment of options and to develop concept designs for the upgrade of Port Hinchinbrook Sewerage Treatment Plant. This report followed other investigations into the Port Hinchinbrook STP regarding the viability of the current plant. The Gardiner report noted the plant is in very poor condition, and recommended to construct a new treatment plant, rather than refurbishing the current STP.

In designing the new STP Gardiner took into account various needs including, plant loading, environmental requirements, the site's location, the state of the current plant, disposal, asset life, hydraulic design and financial implications. The Gardiner design concept provides for a treatment facility for 500 equivalent persons (EP). This reflects the stage 1 loading in the current Department of Environment and Science (DES) license. The current maximum connected loading is estimated at 200 EP. This is due to a large number of lots not currently developed which are not connected to sewerage. Council officers believe the plant in its proposed form has capacity to respond to the sewer needs at Port Hinchinbrook as it becomes further developed into the future.

The report estimates that to construct of the new STP will cost approximately \$6.3million. The report's scope is limited to the solution for the sewerage treatment plant only. Saying this, the report does make reference to significant works needed to reticulation network infrastructure throughout the Port Hinchinbrook estate. Council has undertaken an assessment and estimate the cost of these works to be approximately a further \$2.36million. This sees the total construction costs for the STP and associated reticulation works alone to be around \$8.7Million.

Council believes there are two major options which could result in a long term solution for Port Hinchinbrook residents. These options are set out on the next page of this document. Council is open to suggestions.

### Option 1

Under the Conformed Deed for Port Hinchinbrook Estate, the sewerage treatment is a matter to be owned and managed by the Company under the Deed. Under the Deed, the Company is currently

considered to be The Passage Holdings Pty Ltd (In liquidation). Option 1 is largely suggesting that the Company take control and provide the sewerage service for the property owners of Port Hinchinbrook. The cost of operating this solution would be determined by the stakeholders other than Council.

### Option 2

This option would see Council source funding for a contribution to Council constructing and then operating a sewerage facility. This outcome would see Council as the owners and operators of the sewerage treatment plant and associated infrastructure. The cost of operating the service would be levied through a rates utility charge. In addition to this, it is expected that the Port Hinchinbrook property owners would be required to contribute a capital contribution. Initial estimates of the sewerage utility charge would be in the vicinity of \$3,000 per annum with an additional \$1,500 per year for ten years as a special charge for the capital contribution.

Council is currently in talks with the Liquidator, and the DSDTI as well regarding these options and other matters at Port Hinchinbrook.

### Other Matters

While the sewerage at Port Hinchinbrook is a critical issue that needs to be resolved, there are other matters that are concerning property owners and residents which Council is monitoring.

### Dredging of One Mile Creek

Council at its general meeting on Thursday 10 September 2020 voted to accept three expressions of interest for suitably qualified contractors to prepare a business case for the possible engagement for the dredging of One Mile Creek. This step will see the three companies prepare dredging plans and fixed prices for Council. This is in preparation for Council to submit an application for the allocated \$1.5million of federal funding set aside for this project.

### “Roads” and other Underground Infrastructure

These assets continue to be owned by the Company, The Passage Holdings (in liquidation) and not by Council. All matters in relation to these facilities, their long term ownership and maintenance are still under consideration from all parties.

### Ratepayer Contributions

It should be stated that Council is motivated to facilitate a long term solution for Port Hinchinbrook and sees it as a valuable community asset for the Cassowary Coast. However, Council has not indicated that it will be burdening its regional ratepayers with the costs of restoring Port Hinchinbrook. Funding for any asset renewal will be funding through appropriate mechanisms such as external funding, or special rates and charges for those properties directly benefiting from the works.

On the next page are some frequently asked questions, which may provide some additional information. Thank you for taking the time to read this document, and if you have any comments or feedback on this matter, you can provide your thoughts on the future of the sewerage treatment for all residents in the Port Hinchinbrook Estate. The survey can be completed by either:

- The link to the survey is <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2BYP2RT>
- A hard copy is attached. Once completed if you can:
  - Email to [enquiries@cassowarycoast.qld.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@cassowarycoast.qld.gov.au) ; or
  - Post it PO Box 887, Innisfail Qld 4860
  - In person by dropping the completed survey to one of our customer service centres.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### **Who owns and operates the sewerage treatment service at Port Hinchinbrook?**

The infrastructure remains the property of The Passage Holdings (in liquidation), however in 2018, there were public reports of failures to the plant and reticulation network. This included spillage into local waterways. Following advice from the liquidator, Cassowary Coast Regional Council undertook urgent remedial works to some of the sewerage pump stations to avoid an immediate risk to community, environment, public health and the most of all, the Great Barrier Reef. Following inspections by the Department of Environment and Science (the Regulator), there was a need for ongoing maintenance and management of the STP and associated pump stations.

An interim funding agreement was established with generous assistance from the State Government (DSDTI), for Council to undertake monitoring and maintenance works on a short term basis to keep the STP and the associated pump stations in the reticulation network operational. Part of this agreement was to establish a long-term solution for sewerage at Port Hinchinbrook.

### **How much will the Sewerage charge be for property owners in Port Hinchinbrook?**

The Port Hinchinbrook Estate has quite a small population and as result the share to cover the costs of running a sewerage treatment service is estimated to be in the vicinity of \$3000 per year. With further development of the Estate and a larger user base contributing to the service, this price could reduce. In addition to the sewerage utility charge, and initial capital contribution would also be charged depending on the level of funding available to Council.

### **Is Council operating the Sewerage Treatment Plant the only option?**

No. While the options available to the Port Hinchinbrook for sewerage treatment are quite limited, Council has only agreed that the proposed design can achieve a long term outcome. Council is supportive of the proposed design by Gaden in their report.

### **Will there be any community meetings?**

Currently there are no public meetings planned. Due to Covid-19 requirements and need to engage with property owners, many who do live interstate, Council is not planning to hold public meetings in relation to this matter at this stage. However, any parties may make contact with Council in relation to this matter by either completing the survey, or by emailing enquiries to [enquiries@cassowarycoast.qld.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@cassowarycoast.qld.gov.au).

### **Will Cassowary Coast Regional Council be providing a sewerage service for all of Cardwell?**

Council has no current plans to sewer Cardwell as part of the current process to resolving sewerage management issues within Port Hinchinbrook. However, it may be appropriate to sewer some parts of Cardwell in the future. With this in mind Council has ensured that the Port Hinchinbrook treatment facility design is capable of being upgraded to cater for the additional load should this be the case.

