

Rous Regional Demand Management Plan 2023-2024: Annual report

Responsible Officer: Group Manager Planning and Delivery (Andrew Logan)

Recommendation

That Council receive and note the progress of demand management deliverables for the 2022-2023 financial year including budget expenditure.

Background

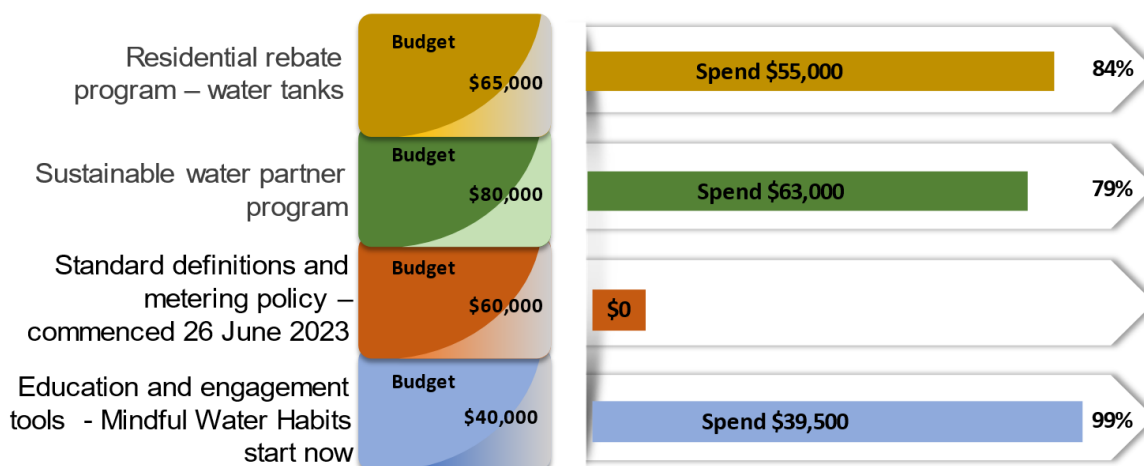
The Rous Regional Demand Management Plan: 2023-2026 (RDMP) was approved by Council on October 19, 2022 (Council Resolution 70/22). While significant progress has been made on the 2022/2023 actions in the plan, the start of the plan was delayed by 4 months. The delay was caused by the February 2022 floods and the ongoing impacts of Covid 19. Recruitment and onboarding of two new staff have further contributed to delayed actions. A highlight for this year was the successful launch of the social media campaign 'Mindful Water Habits start now'. The aim was to raise awareness amongst Rous's target audience of the importance of water conservation, simultaneously driving mindful water consumption using emotive story telling.

The new Regional Water Education Officer started in late January and is focusing engagement efforts on schools, taking advantage of the existing links to water education identified within the NSW curriculum. The catchment activity model trailer has been used to increase public recognition and water awareness by appearing at four community-based events and several school incursions involving over 350 students. Bookings are set to continue into the next financial year and further resources and feedback tools are being developed.

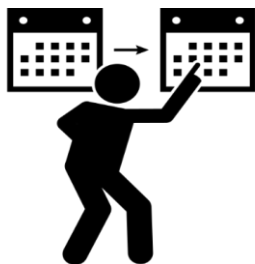
Progress has gained momentum with several other projects underway including the standard definitions and metering policy for Rous and the constituent councils. Hydrosphere Consulting has been engaged and has commenced on this body of work which will be finalised by December 2023. This policy development will improve consistency of connection types and detailed reporting enabling more targeted demand management initiatives and regional collaboration. The sustainable water partnership pilot program is underway with up to 15 on-site water assessments to be undertaken in the first quarter of 2023/2024.

The following is a snapshot of progress for actions for the first eight months of the RDMP .

Budget/Expenditure 2022/2023



Deferred programs starting 2023-2024



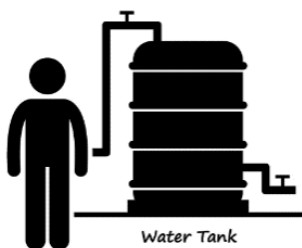
- ◆ Behaviour change pilot program (\$40K)
- ◆ Sustainable water partner program Pilot (\$20K)
- ◆ Feasibility of education facility (\$20K).

Sustainable water partner program 2022/2023

- ◆ Finalised Cape Byron Power and Broadwater Sugar Mill project
- ◆ Completed recycled water projects to Byron Bay Bowling Club and the Habitat Complex
- ◆ Media and business subscriptions.



Residential water tank rebate 2022/2023



% Applications by LGA

Byron 15.4%
Ballina 17.3%
Richmond 17.3%
Lismore 50%

- ◆ 379,042L total tank volume
- ◆ 46 total approved applications
- ◆ 20 internal toilet connections
- ◆ 20 laundry connections

Education/Engagement

1. Catchment Activity Model Trailer

- ◆ Presented to over 350 school children from different local schools
- ◆ Pre and post knowledge assessments showed an increase in understanding on issues including pollution in our waterways and erosion
- ◆ Appeared at four community events: Primex, Banyula Farms for Sustainable Agriculture, Landcare Riverfest and Living Lab Northern Rivers
- ◆ Feedback stated "Great presentation. Wonderful resources. Clear and concise explanations".



2. Demand management social media



- ◆ Facebook: 34 posts, highest views 672 likes 15, average 206 views
- ◆ Instagram: 31 posts, highest views 65 likes 16 average views 39.4
- ◆ Posts included videos, links, product, and event advertisement promoting sustainable water practices and catchment health.

3. 'Mindful Water Habits start now' campaign

- ◆ Reached 138,848 people with a 4.9 frequency achieving 681K impressions
- ◆ Achieved 82,600 15 second views (thruplays) and 190,200 video views
- ◆ 6000 link clicks to download the educational eBook
- ◆ The older age ranges of 55-64 and 65+ showed the most interest across the whole campaign
- ◆ Women in the 65+ age range were the most engaged video watchers and people most likely to click through to the eBook.



4. Water Night 2022



- ◆ The campaign resulted in a 26% increase in water literacy
- ◆ Advertising ran through September to November 2022
- ◆ Facebook: 10 posts averaging 600 views, 6 likes each
- ◆ Instagram 10 posts averaging 53 views each
- ◆ Articles in the Echo and on the Rous County Council website
- ◆ Morning tea hosted by Rous with live conferencing
- ◆ 10 trees planted for every household registered.

Smart metering and backflow prevention

- ◆ Smart metering to be installed on all Rous water supply customers (>2100 connections)
- ◆ Lead contractor Nucleus 3 Pty Ltd
- ◆ Practical completion February 2024
- ◆ Telstra Cumulocity "IoT Device Management" will link all the smart meters / loggers into the NB-IoT wireless network and provide the initial landing place for data
- ◆ Customers can access their meter data via a web portal and/or a mobile (Apple or Google) App
- ◆ Customers will be in a position to better monitor leakages.



Water loss management program



- ◆ Active leak detection program – fully funded by NSW DPIE - surveyed 140km of water pipes. The leaks identified and repaired and reduced our water loss by approximately 38 million litres per annum, equivalent to 32 olympic swimming pools or 12% of Council's non-revenue water. Leaks were also identified on customer service lines equating to 42 million litres per annum. Customers were notified of the leaks.
- ◆ Purchase and installation of 6 additional flow meters for system monitoring to improve the speed and accuracy of finding and repairing leaks
- ◆ Successfully obtained additional \$114,000 funding from NSW DPIE to roll out advanced pressure management and water network monitoring technology
- ◆ Repaired and replaced several aged and leaking water mains including a 300mm pipeline supplying Byron and a 375mm pipeline that supplies Lismore Heights.

Water supply pricing

- ◆ Rous County Council is currently discussing with the constituent councils the option of moving to a consumption-based pricing model which will provide significantly increased incentive for the constituent councils to reduce water loss and save water.



**Install
a tank
& save**

**up to
\$2,170
rebate for a
rainwater
tank***

*Terms and conditions apply

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SECURING A SUSTAINABLE WATER SUPPLY FOR THE FUTURE OF THE NORTHERN RIVERS

Since the 1950s, Rous County Council has supplied councils and customers across the Northern Rivers with a safe and reliable supply of water. From drinking to farming or running a business, a dependable supply of water supports our region's enviable lifestyle. The primary water source servicing most of the community is Rocky Creek Dam upstream of Lismore. We are privileged that its catchment area is the pristine Nightcap National Park on Widjabul Wia-bal country, delivering excellent water quality for the Nightcap Water Treatment Plant to do its job. Emigrant Creek Dam supplies Ballina and Lennox Head, and we also manage the Wilsons River and groundwater sources that bolster supply during extended periods of dry weather.

Securing a sustainable supply of water for the future is a strong focus for Rous. The combination of a growing population and a changing climate is placing unsustainable pressure on our existing water sources. To face these challenges, we need to take an 'all options on the table' planning approach and investigate all the options that are available to us. Our method is holistic and includes water saving initiatives, expanding the capacity of our current supply sources, and providing new water sources.

Many in our community are mindful about how they use water, saving it where they can, and we are pleased to support this conservation through rebates for residential water tanks. However, these actions alone are not enough to guarantee a reliable supply into the future, especially in extended dry periods like El Nino. A resilient and sustainable supply of water may involve one or a combination of different options including water saving measures, groundwater, surface water, purified recycled water and desalination. Diversifying the range of rainfall independent water sources may also offer increased resilience to drought.

Every day, every member of our community depends on water. It takes a strong commitment to long-term planning to safeguard a sustainable supply now and well into the future.

LOCAL BUSINESSES PARTNER WITH ROUS COUNTY COUNCIL TO REDUCE WATER USE



Cape Byron Power

Local businesses have been taking direct action to reduce their water use by joining Rous's Sustainable Water Partner Program. One such company to team up with Rous is Cape Byron Power. For more than two years Cape Byron Power has monitored its water consumption and developed projects that optimise its town water use. The project has achieved significant milestones, including the installation of new sub-meters and automated smart water meters, which has helped isolate different operations and provide accurate real-time data on water consumption.

Cape Byron Power's Co-Generation Operations Manager, Todd Andrews, said smart metering is now indispensable for its ability to monitor any unusual water usage. "Water is an essential part of operations at Cape Byron Power. Water efficiency and optimisation is not only important for our environment, but it makes sound business sense. Smart metering is an invaluable tool for Cape Byron Power to instantly respond to any unusual spikes in water use. The data that smart metering technology provides means we can efficiently monitor our water consumption and investigate and respond to any abnormalities in a timely manner. It has also allowed for the identification and implementation of projects that reduce demand on our precious drinking water supply," Mr Andrews said.

Are you a local business? Benefit from reduced water use now. Connect through the Qr Code for more information.



THINK TANK!

Looking for ways to save water?

Think rainwater tank!

Join thousands of locals who have installed a rainwater tank and saved money through Rous County Council's rainwater tank rebate program. Rebates of up to \$2,170* are available for installing a rainwater tank as well as connecting your rainwater tank to internal fixtures like toilets and washing machines. Installing a rainwater tank and harvesting rainwater is a great way of saving money on water bills and it also helps to reduce the demand on our drinking water supply. The rebate program applies to residents connected to the town water supply in the council areas of Ballina, Byron, Lismore and Richmond Valley.



*Terms and conditions apply.

Rebates of up to \$2,170*

Rous County Council, the bulk water supplier to our region, offers rainwater tank rebates in partnership with Ballina Shire Council, Byron Shire Council, Lismore City Council and Richmond Valley Council to assist residents to save water.

Purchase and installation – for at least one outdoor use	Rebate amount*
2,000 litres to 4,499 litre capacity tank	\$200
4,500 litres to 8,999 litres capacity tank	\$800
9,000 litres and above capacity tank	\$1,000
Additional rebates available to connect tank internally	Rebate amount*
Toilets	\$620
Washing machine	\$550

* Terms and conditions apply. Visit rous.nsw.gov.au

In partnership with

