
Sustainable Water Partner Pilot Program

Responsible Officer: Group Manager Planning and Delivery (Scott Turner Acting)

Recommendation

The council receive and note the report and support:-

1. Rous continue to promote the program to high water users and specific priority industry sectors, including a subset of each target business type across the region.

Overview / Background

The approved Rous Regional Demand Management Plan 2023 – 2026 includes a targeted and broader approach to delivery of the Sustainable Water Partner Program (SWPP) as this expenditure has previously been cost effective and the program provides valuable customer engagement.

The Sustainable Water Partner Program (Pilot) implemented in 2023 built on the success of work undertaken previously which targeted businesses using more than 5 megalitres of water per annum.

Objectives

The objectives of the SWPP are to assist non-residential customers to improve water efficiency and reduce water/sewer bills. The SWPP consists of three parts: water efficiency plans, water efficiency projects and recognition.

The Pilot was modified as follows:

- Rous identified target business types that were likely to benefit from the program with a subset (e.g. three) of each target business type across the region. The Pilot was rolled-out to the businesses participating in the pilot program with the aim of refining the program based on the outcomes of the pilot programs.
- Fully funded water efficiency plans were made available to all businesses included in the pilot program.
- Rebates for water efficiency projects identified in the water efficiency plans developed through the pilot program are funded (50% of the cost of each approved project) to a maximum of \$15,000 per business. The range of water efficiency projects eligible for funding included all water efficient products certified by The Water Conservancy and through the WELS program (Smart Approved WaterMark - The Water Conservancy).
- Mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and engagement were developed with each participating customer as part of the pilot program to measure the success of SWPP initiatives.

Implementation

To undertake this work Rous County Council invited several consultancies to quote on delivery of the services. The Water Conservancy was awarded the contract which included the installation of smart meters to provide data usage.

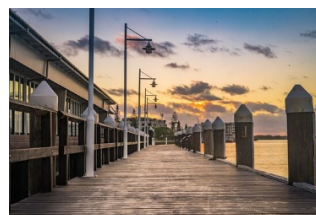
Pilot Program Deliverables

1. Lead initial engagement with targeted businesses.
2. Conduct onsite water assessment of businesses.
3. Produce a water efficiency plan for each business including water efficiency project of works.

Participating businesses



- St Finbarr's Primary School Byron Bay
- Southern Cross Public School Ballina
- Primary School Ballina



- RSL Ballina
- Cherry Street Bowling Club Ballina
- Bowling Club Evans Head
- The Federal Hotel Alstonville
- Bamboo Thai Bangalow



- Settlers Motel Alstonville
- Waves Bryon Bay
- The Arabella Garden Inn Alstonville



- Aquatic Centre Evans Head
- Memorial Pool Ballina
- Aquatic Centre Alstonville

Three restaurants were approached to participate on the basis that inefficient wok cooking burners can use an excess amount of water for cooling. Only one restaurant agreed to participate.

Results

Water efficiency plans with a program of works were developed for every business except the Ballina War Memorial Pool where there were limited options for achieving further water savings. Across the 14 businesses the water efficiency programs of works identified a potential water savings of 11,206 kL/year.

If all businesses proceed with the water efficiency projects identified, Rous will pay out a total rebate of \$61,815. The Ballina RSL, Cherry Street Bowling Club, The Federal Hotel and St Finbarr's Primary School have implemented some or all of the changes outlined in their programs of work and have received a rebate. Rous is continuing to encourage the other businesses to adopt the measures identified in their reports. The program end date is 30 June 2024.

Evaluation

- Installation of smart metering
 - provides good insight into water use generally and issues related to the functioning of the main water meter
 - provides an instant response to high usage
 - can detect leaks across a site which is particularly useful after hours when venues such as schools are closed.
- Grouping the work together in a short period of time is an effective way of utilising time and resources and is beneficial in comparing similar businesses.
- There are substantial cost savings for each business that implements the water efficiency projects of works in full.
- The potential water savings from these works are not significant for Rous in the context of reducing overall water demand across its customer base. The cost of engaging the consultant was considerable given the results achieved. It is considered that Rous could deliver better value for money through training its own staff to undertake future assessments and support businesses to implement changes.