

## **Suburban solution**

### **Dwindling water supplies and a blistering drought has spurred 14 local councils in Queensland to explore new ways to meet growing demands for water.**

In the Maranoa-Balonne and Border Rivers catchments – where industry is experiencing high growth rates but is limited by water - every drop is being conserved through 21 projects ranging from stormwater reuse, to effluent management, to water loss audits.

Funded with \$150,000, matched dollar for dollar by participating councils, from the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and the Natural Heritage Trust, the projects will run over the next two years. An additional \$62,000 in-kind support will be provided by the NAP/NHT funded regional body, the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee Inc., with staff providing technical support and advice for all projects.

QMDC's Project Coordinator Gavin Prentice says that shires throughout the region will ultimately better understand water loss and how to minimise it.

Bendemere Shire Council, for example, is helping home owners to purchase pumps and make their homes grey water ready.

“This project provides incentives to local residents to encourage re-use of grey water and save on current bore water use,” Gavin explains. “The grey-water is intended to be used for lawns and gardens. The incentive will provide financial and support resources for the installation of grey-water storage tanks and associated pumping equipment at private residences within Bendemere Shire.”

Over in the Murilla Shire towns are being assisted with rainwater tank installation and effluent reuse. Landholders in Miles and Dulacca – or those connected to the town water supply - can receive a cash rebate on the purchase and installation of a rainwater tank. The cash-back amount depends on the size of the tank. For example, a 1,000 gallon tank receives a \$100 subsidy and a 4,000 gallon tank receives \$400.

Another project that has been embraced by the community is in Talwood, which Gavin says has attracted all locals including Talwood school students in planning and building a water use efficient and native plant demonstration garden.

“The project provides members of the Talwood community with information in relation to water efficient plant species and gardening practices to encourage them to adopt such practices in their own gardens,” he says. “As a result we have seen a visible improvement to the area and education and involvement of school children. More importantly we have achieved education and involvement of local residents to help change the public awareness and acceptance of changes to water charging, water consumption per household and the number of private gardens adopting water efficient practices.”

In Warroo Shire there is a project that aims to install tap timer meters in residences, schools, parks, reserves and sporting ovals to enable water usage to be monitored.

The main objective is to encourage residents to limit and monitor their water usage and minimise wastage of water resources. The water consumption trends will be monitored through monthly water consumption reports.

In addition, extra funds from the Natural Heritage Trust and National Action Plan are contributing to a System Leakage Management Plan (SLMP), which documents water supply system leakage, identifies measures to reduce leakage and a plan to implement those measures that are cost effective.

Six shires are undertaking System Loss Audits as part of this program, conducted largely by Wide Bay Water because of their experience with South East Queensland councils.

The first step is to prepare and certify a System Loss Management Plan for each individual participating Council to help them meet their requirements under the new State Government changes to the Queensland Water Act.

Next the council undertakes a desktop study to determine the current levels of leakage, water losses and system pressure in the water supply distribution network of for each individual participating Council and its service area.

Field measurements are then undertaken throughout each individual participating Council's water network including pressure and flow analysis where necessary. This field data is analysed to make assessment and recommendations with respect to current levels of leakage and pressure management.

Following this, a detailed plan is provided for the future establishment of district meter areas or pressure zones of each individual participating Council's Water network. Finally, a detailed water demand management strategy is prepared for each individual participating Council with the aim of optimising water and infrastructure provision.

"These are just a glimpse of the suburban efforts underway in south-west Queensland," Gavin says. "But already these are changing the way local residents think about how their townships use water."

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