

# BUNDARRA SEWER SCHEME

## INFORMATION SHEET

May 2019



This information sheet has been produced in response to a series of questions raised by members of the community at a public meeting in Bundarra on 21 March 2019.

1. *Have Council decided which pods they are going to use?*

A formal decision on which brand of pod will be used in the network has not been made.

2. *How much will electricity cost to have the pumps going?*

GHD has advised that the electricity cost for the pod is an additional \$30 a year on the property electricity bill.

3. *Are there benefits from Council to cover the cost of running the pump?*

The electricity costs associated with running the pod will be included in the electricity bill for the property and payable by the property owner.

4. *I'm not going to pay the access charge – why do we have to [pay it] if there has been no work? Council has done nothing to show for what we are paying. Residents are paying \$559 for no sewage service.*

This is noted as a comment from a member of the public. In general, refusal to pay the Sewer Access Charge will result in the debt accruing against the property.

Council has resolved to cease charging the Sewer Access Charge until the necessary additional funds for the scheme can be found.

5. *If Uralla was to have a new sewer system, would they have to pay extra on their rates?*

The Sewer Access Charge is a single charge, meaning property owners pay the same rate to use Council's sewer scheme whether the property is in Bundarra or Uralla. The costs of funding new sewer schemes are taken into account when determining the value of the Sewer Access Charge. All property owners connected, or capable of being connected, to a sewer scheme are levied a Sewer Access Charge. At this point in time, there are no plans for (another) new sewer scheme for the Shire.

6. *Why isn't Uralla Shire Council paying for the sewer scheme?*

Uralla Shire Council has insufficient funds to cover the cost of building a new sewer scheme. Top up grant funding is therefore required. Sewer Access Charges raise the funds necessary to cover the cost of a sewerage treatment network. Costs include building, operating, maintaining the network along with any depreciation and capital expenditure costs for that network.

7. *We are in Limbo ... When can we know that this scheme is going ahead?*

Council is waiting for a response from the Department of Primary Industries, Water, in regard to a request for additional funding. When Council has further information from the Department this will be communicated to the public.

8. *Have Council already bought the land to put the ponds on?*

Council resolved at its meeting on 27 March 2018 to purchase the land identified as the preferred site for the sewerage treatment plant.

9. *Why can't we have a reticulation (gravity sewer) system?*

The Bundarra Sewer Scheme (low pressure sewer system) will deliver a reticulated sewerage treatment network for the village. Low pressure sewer systems are more effective in flat areas serving larger blocks where there is shallow topsoil over rock.

### COUNCIL CONTACTS

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10. *Where is the money from the original grant? It was a Safe & Secure water grant, we need safe and secure drinking water more than a new sewer system.*

*Who made the decision to use the grant money for the Bundarra sewer?*

*Why can't we have safe secure water?*

The need for a sewer scheme for Bundarra was identified in the 1980s. Council commissioned a Sewering Strategy Report from Public Works Australia in 1989. This report recommended that a sewer scheme for Bundarra was appropriate.

Grant funds were required as Council was unable to raise the funds required for such a scheme. In 2016 the NSW Government announced funding approval for projects to provide sewerage treatment infrastructure for regional towns in NSW. Council was successful in receiving funds through this scheme.

The money from this grant, along with funds from Council's sewer funds, is currently being spent on the design of the scheme, obtaining the required government approvals, land acquisition and preparing tender documents for the construction phase of the project.

Having funding for the sewer scheme does not prevent Council from applying for additional funds to support upgrades to the drinking water supply network.

11. *How much will decommissioning the property's septic tank cost?*

Decommissioning the septic tank is estimated to cost in the order of \$500 to \$1000. Property owners are advised to obtain quotes from their chosen tradesperson. Property owners will also have access to a schedule of rates by the construction contractor for the project if they wish to compare prices (to be announced).

12. *Who is responsible for decommissioning the old septic tanks?*

Decommissioning the existing septic tank is the responsibility of the property owner. The property owner may choose to do this work themselves, use the construction contractor or engage another contractor. Property owners are responsible for arranging contract works with the contractor of their choice. See also the answer to Question 10.

13. *How long will it take to get the new Pod system?*

At this stage the timeframe for construction is not confirmed as Council is waiting on a response from the Department of Primary Industry Water in regard to a request for additional funding.

As a guide, there is expected to be a 14 month time frame between commencement of the construction tender process to completion of the construction work.

14. *What happens if Council doesn't get the funding?*

If Council's request for additional funding through the NSW Safe and Secure Water Program is unsuccessful Council will consider the other financing and design options available. These options include: borrowing money to complete the project, or delaying the completion of the project until such time as funds can be secured. Redesigning/re-scoping the project, and abandoning the project, are also options.

15. *When will Council decide on what to do?*

Council is waiting on a response from the NSW Department of Industry Water in regard to the current request for additional funds. Council has not been advised how long the assessment process by the Department is likely to take.

16. *I am concerned about the 9 m air stack near the Showground: will the smell go into my back yard?*

The combination of a high vent pipe with a charcoal air filter will reduce the impact of potential odours from the pump station to neighbouring properties.

17. *Why can't treated water come back into Bundarra from the treatment plant?*

The proposed treatment process does not provide the high level of treatment required for urban effluent reuse.

18. *20 hectares (for extra land) is awfully large for the size of Bundarra – is it necessary to have such a big area?*

The size of the site allows for irrigation areas and future expansion of the facility.

19. *Can pensioners get support for the extra rates? Possibly zero interest loans to help?*

Pensioners can access a Pensioner Concession on their rates. Council will determine whether additional financial support can be offered to the community on the basis of the outcome of the current funding request to the Department of Primary Industry, Water.

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20. *Please clarify the planning related reason for the boundary of the pod/pump sewer system. For example, large area lots outside [the] village zone have adequate land mass to dispose of waste water.*

The area of the scheme is based largely on the "Village" land use zone for Bundarra. The boundaries of this land use zone were moved to accommodate any tenement that could be serviced on the scheme by extending the sewer main infrastructure at minimal cost. The area of the Village land use zone does not include properties or tenements south of Darby Street.

21. *Council should suspend the levy immediately as nothing [is] happening! Can we put an appeal into Council regarding paying extra money for something we don't have?*

Council determined to lift the Sewer Access Charge for the forthcoming Financial Year (i.e. 2019 - 2020) if additional funding cannot be secured by 30 June 2019 at an Extraordinary Meeting of Council on 18 March 2019.

Under this scenario, the Sewer Access Charge will be reapplied in the first Financial Year following securing additional grant funds.

If Council obtains additional funds for the scheme prior to 30 June 2019, the Sewer Access Charge will continue to apply.

22. *Will the access cost to landholders go up even further, e.g. \$559 and now \$573 with CPI?*

The Sewer Access Charge will increase in successive financial years. The rate of increase is typically related to recovering the necessary costs to operate and maintain the scheme.

23. *What is the cost to residents for inspections of the Pods?*

Unlike on-site septic systems, there is no requirement for ongoing regular inspections of the Pods. Council will not charge property owners additional costs for inspections that occur due to standard maintenance or servicing needs.

Any emergency repairs that are required due to misuse or damage caused by the residents will be payable by the property owner.

24. *Will the value of our land go up with having a new sewerage system and therefore will our rates go up?*

The NSW Valuer General determines the value of land and every three years provides a notice of valuation to property owners. Councils use the Valuer General's land value in calculating a portion of the general rate.

25. *What are the estimated costs for the landholder?*

GHD have prepared a property report, detailing the plumbing and electrical upgrades required on each property. A copy of this plan has been sent to each property owner. Property owners are encouraged to seek quotes for this work from their chosen qualified tradesperson as these costs are not covered by the funding available.

The pod will be installed at no cost to the property owner. Decommissioning the old septic tank and the electricity costs associated with running the pump are also at the property owner's expense.

26. *Where has the money Council has received from residents gone, has Council kept it aside?*

Sewer Access Charges for Bundarra property owners included in the project design area were introduced at the beginning of the 2017/2018 Financial Year. As at May 2019 the total value of Sewer Access Charge levied to Bundarra Residents was \$231,286. The total cost of the project to date is \$440,804. These costs do not take into account the forthcoming cost of land acquisition for the sewerage treatment plant. The project continues to progress through the detailed design phase including obtaining approvals and preparing for tender.

27. *How much to fix the pumps?*

Landholders will be given a user guide book explaining how to use the system; the materials that can and cannot be disposed of in the system and what do to if there is a fault.

If a fault occurs, and this is not associated with inappropriate use of the system, Council will provide a free maintenance service. Council will also replace system components at no additional cost to the landholder/resident if required.

If however a fault occurs due to inappropriate use of the system, the costs of maintenance/repair/replacement will be passed to the landholder.

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