



MEDIA RELEASE

Water Quality Improvements

Protecting and restoring the health of Norfolk Island's environment is a critical issue for all, including the community, government and our visitors. This includes the protection of our surface and groundwater, and the marine waters these flow into. If left unaddressed, impacts to Norfolk Island's waters will affect current and future generations and, in turn, affect the island's potential to be self-sustaining.

A number of studies over recent years have shown that water quality issues in the KAVHA catchment (Watermill and Town Creeks) are having an impact on marine waters and the coral reef within Emily and Slaughter Bays through increased nutrient loads and sediment. This issue is in addition to ensuring that our beaches and marine waters are safe for humans to use and to swim in.

NIRC has been working on ways to try to improve water quality through its planning controls. In the coming weeks, NIRC will place on exhibition an update to the Water Resources Development Control Plan (DCP 2), which will consider improvements to Onsite Wastewater Management Systems for new developments. This update will be an important step in improving water quality from individual properties. Changes will be focused on designing systems that prevent water quality impacts beyond a property's boundary and to protect sensitive water resources such as groundwater bores and downstream catchments. There will also be proposed changes regarding water storage and rainfall catchment requirements for new activities or developments. More details on these proposed changes are provided in a separate NIRC media release this week.

As part of the effort to improve water quality on Norfolk Island with a focus on Emily/Slaughter Bays and the Marine Park, a Water Quality Working Group has been formed amongst government bodies. NIRC, Parks Australia, the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (DITRDC) and the Office of the Administrator are meeting on a routine basis to discuss and coordinate actions for water quality improvement. Some of these actions have already been implemented, including the installation of leaky weirs, and the installation of cattle fencing along Watermill Creek by DITRDC and Parks Australia. These measures are critical in working towards a healthy catchment. The group will also consider future activities relating to water quality, including NIRC's efforts to licence and inspect existing Onsite Wastewater Management Systems.

Details on the proposed minimum standards for new Onsite Wastewater Management Systems will be communicated with the public when the draft Water Resources DCP is placed on exhibition. Council staff will also be available to explain these standards to community members where there are enquiries.

Phil Reid

MANAGER PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

15 July 2021