

## Forrest wastewater investigation Proposed wastewater vision

### Background

Barwon Water and Colac Otway Shire Council are partnering with the Forrest community to investigate opportunities for wastewater improvements in the township.

This partnership acknowledges the growing role tourism plays in Forrest and the regional economy, and the increasing stress this may place on existing wastewater systems in the town.

As part of the project, independent consultants (Decentralised Water and Kernow Environmental Services) have been appointed to support this project through an independent audit of onsite wastewater systems to assess current performance and develop wastewater options for consideration based on community feedback.

The project will progress over the next six months and include many opportunities for community input, including listening posts, community workshops and sessions and surveys.

The primary objective of the project is to prepare a report which identifies a range of possible options and develop a preferred option for the ongoing management of wastewater in Forrest.

### Consultation and engagement

Since commencing the project in September 2017, Barwon Water and the Colac Otway Shire have been talking with the community to better understand their issues and what they would like to see from the project.

In conjunction with these conversations, Colac Otway Shire Council undertook a wastewater audit within Forrest to better understand how the town's septic systems were performing.

A number of properties are not retaining wastewater on site and are discharging to the local environment. Colac Otway Shire shared the full findings of the audit with the wastewater consultant appointed to assist with developing wastewater improvements.

#### Community survey results

Barwon Water placed a survey on its online Your Say site and distributed hard copies to all residents and businesses. The community were asked:

- What are the top three things which make Forrest special to you?
- Which of these statements best characterises how you feel about the wastewater issues facing Forrest?
- Which two aspects of the wastewater issue do you experience most?
- What outcome are you MOST seeking from the upcoming wastewater investigation?

To date, 87 responses have been received. The main findings of the survey were:

- The vast majority of respondents felt it was the natural landscape, leafy green environment and quiet, peaceful aspects of the town which make Forrest special;
- Over half of respondents felt that wastewater was a significant problem and a request for immediacy to address the issue. Not all residents agreed with this with a small percentage believing there was no problem.
- The two issues associated with wastewater experienced the most by respondents were bad smells followed equally by polluted environment and potential risks to public health.
- In response to outcomes for the project, the two highest priorities were "protection of local waterways and natural environment" and "avoidance of costs and affordability for residents."

A full summary of the community survey and results has been prepared and is available on our website (<https://www.yoursay.barwonwater.vic.gov.au/forrest>)

### Community visioning workshop summary

Barwon Water together with Colac Otway Shire hosted a community visioning workshop in December, 2017 to take a deeper look into community values and attitudes.

Participants listened to a range of speakers including Barwon Water and Colac Otway Shire about the wastewater audit results and community survey findings.

They were invited to share their reasons for attending, the main reasons identified were discussing the technical results of the audit, community feedback and raising wastewater issues and challenges with other community members.

There were discussions about key aspects that needed to be considered as part of the visioning process. Results from the community survey were used to generate discussion and encourage participants to provide further detail into the key aspects of the vision.

### **Proposed vision statement and aspects**

The results of both the survey and vision workshop have been collated and adapted to form a draft community vision statement and success measures for consideration (please see below).

The visioning aspects include more detail of the social, environmental, and economic outcomes that stakeholders seek to achieve from the project. Importantly, the visioning aspects include how these outcomes will be measured to determine the success of the project.

This is to ensure that the options put forward as potential solutions for this project reflect the community's visions of success.

**Proposed vision statement:** ***"The Forrest wastewater management solution will be innovative and cost effective, whilst providing protection of public health, environment and the Forrest way of life."***

### **Proposed vision aspects and success measures:**

Visioning aspect	How will this be measured?
<b>Ensure protection of human and environmental health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Reduction in pollution to waterways</li><li>✓ Reduction of offsite discharges</li><li>✓ Estimated reduction in disease burden</li></ul>
<b>Enhance community and way of life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Economic impact to Forrest</li><li>✓ Increase to Tourism</li><li>✓ Change to population/resident make up</li><li>✓ Community support for solution</li></ul>
<b>Establish an equitable and affordable solution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Up-front costs and life cycle costs</li><li>✓ Fair and equitable distribution of costs</li></ul>
<b>Create flexible wastewater options for the future</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Ability to stage/adapt</li><li>✓ Ability to cater for residents and visitors (tourism)</li></ul>
<b>Showcase innovation and best practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Opportunities for water recycling and energy recovery.</li><li>✓ Level of flexibility of options</li><li>✓ Showcase / case study potential</li><li>✓ Level of water cycle integration</li></ul>

## Next steps

Barwon Water and Colac Otway Shire are inviting the community to provide feedback on the proposed vision statement, aspects and measures by the end of March, 2018.

Following this, the vision and success measures will be finalised and used in conjunction with the audit results to help inform wastewater options for the community to consider.

A second community session will be held on **Sunday, March 18** to identify possible solutions that will help achieve the vision.

We invite everyone to come along and participate.

In addition to this, and being mindful not everyone can attend these sessions, we will also be engaging in a number of other ways including online (<https://www.yoursay.barwonwater.vic.gov.au/forrest>), letter drops, social media and at listening posts in Forrest throughout February and early March.

Keep an eye out for posters and fliers around town and in the Forrest Post with these dates.

If you have any questions or comments on the proposed vision and aspects, please leave a comment on our website, or contact Community and Stakeholder Engagement Co-ordinator Kate Vallence on 0428 407 961.