

PIMPAMA COOMERA WATER FUTURES PROJECT

AUSTRALIAN FIRST APPROACH TO WATER CONSERVATION

Cutting water consumption by up to 84% sounds pretty impressive – but achieving this massive reduction in water usage is just one outcome of the Pimpama Coomera Water Futures Project.

The groundbreaking project is the first in Australia to integrate a range of water saving initiatives on such a large scale, for an eventual community of up to 150,000 people, and is being driven by a far-reaching Master Plan, developed in a unique partnership between the Gold Coast City Council, the community, environmentalists and developers.

Councillor Daphne McDonald, who chaired the Advisory Committee behind the Master Plan, believes the project will become a model for future development in Gold Coast City and other fast-growing urban areas in Australia.

“The Pimpama Coomera region will be Australia’s first fully integrated water sustainable community on such a large scale, and – when fully implemented - the innovative Master Plan has the potential to make a substantial contribution to a sustainable Waterfuture for the Gold Coast,” Cr McDonald says.

“Once fully implemented, the Pimpama Coomera community will be more aware of the value of water, use less water, use water from a number of alternative sources, and live in a sustainable urban environment, enjoying a healthy environment and healthy waterways.”

The project will see dual reticulation installed in new homes to deliver the right quality of water, for the right purpose – drinking water for the kitchen and recycled water for toilet flushing and outside use, with rainwater tanks providing water for bathrooms, laundries and hot water systems.

Rainwater tanks will help reduce stormwater flow, while water sensitive urban design will further improve stormwater management and ‘smart sewers’ will reduce the volume of wastewater and cut costs.

As well as reducing drinking water consumption so dramatically, the plan aims to reduce the quantity of treated wastewater released back into the environment; reduce greenhouse gas emissions; minimise the amount of stormwater entering the wastewater system; reduce the quantity of stormwater runoff to waterways and improve the quality of that stormwater runoff.

What makes the project so innovative, is the combination of water saving measures and the scale on which they will be implemented, however engineers are also leading the water industry with the design and manufacture of many of the individual components of the new integrated system.

“Cutting edge new materials are being used for constructing water and wastewater systems, incorporating new design principles and manufacturing processes. The new materials such as polyethylene, PVC and polypropylene are lightweight, easily installed and remove the potential for joint failure, increase performance, as well as reduce infiltration,” Cr McDonald says.

Even the exhaustive process of developing the Master Plan demonstrated real innovation, and a new level of cooperation between Council, residents, developers and environmentalists over an 18-month period.

Environmental representative on the Advisory Committee, David Thirgood describes the project as an exciting venture from an environmental perspective.

“This Master Plan represents a win for the Gold Coast and a win for the environment. At worst this Plan won’t negatively impact on the environment and at best it puts back more than it takes out.”

Developers have also embraced the project – Coomera Waters is now well established, and in 2002 was named the champion project in sustainable development by the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency and the Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA).

Developer Austcorp’s Executive Chairman Trevor Chappell says sustainability has proven to be a good selling point.

“Environment and lifestyle are the area’s greatest assets, and the two are intimately related, so the pursuit of market appeal and environmental protection finds a perfect match here,” Mr Chappell says.

It’s a sentiment echoed by Adam Gilbert of Global Properties Australia, developers of the \$125 million master planned community, Coomera Springs.

“At Coomera Springs, sustainable development has been a key priority, working to achieve best practice stormwater management, water conservation, bush fire management and habitat protection,” Mr Gilbert says.

“These issues will increasingly influence the way property is developed and figure in the home-buying decision.”

The Pimpama Coomera Waterfuture Master Plan will be progressively implemented as development occurs in the area, with completion of major new wastewater and recycled water plants at Pimpama scheduled for 2007.

“Council will also be conducting further research in collaboration with the Griffith Centre for Coastal Management to see just how well the initiatives work, as we strive for continual innovation throughout implementation” Cr McDonald said.

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