

26 May 2009

Dear Home Owner/Resident

### **Decision Made On the Future of Bore Water in Longreach**

After thorough investigation, consultation and discussions with the community, a decision has been reached regarding the future of the bore water system in Longreach. At the general meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May, Council resolved to **retain bores as a supply source** and seek to **blend the bore water to the river water supply**, with an implementation program to be developed to **phase out the bore water reticulation system**.

It is important to note that we are **not losing the bore water supply – only the reticulation system** that takes bore water to individual residences. There will be a plan to implement the process and we will be looking at ways to potentially subsidise hot water systems, plumbing and associated costs for home owners. The phasing out of the bore water reticulation system will be done over a period of time.

The Longreach Regional Council was faced with the issue of making a decision regarding the future of the bore water reticulation system when it was brought to their attention soon after the election in March 2008 that significant works were needed on this system. Over \$8m was going to be needed to repair and replace the existing bore water reticulation system and this, coupled with significant works to the value of \$10m being required on the river water, which is the only potable (suitable for drinking) supply, would have led to significant rate increases. Council investigated funding for the replacement and/or repair of the reticulation systems for both bore and river water and found there are no grants or funding available for reticulation systems.

Whilst council would ideally have liked to keep both reticulation systems, to do so would have been irresponsible given the costs and burden on ratepayers today and into the future. Council has made a financially responsible decision, which has the added benefit of allowing Longreach to use twice as much bore water as they do today, improving the ability of Longreach to cope during dry times.

Attached is a list of frequently asked questions and answers that we hope will cover many of your queries.

Yours sincerely



**Michelle McFadyen**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**ARE THE BORES BEING SHUT DOWN?** NO. The bores will remain in use and will not be shut down. In fact, given the bores are both almost 100 years old, they will eventually be replaced with a new bore. The bore water will be blended into the river water system and will in fact double the amount of bore water currently being used by the community. The bore water reticulation system (i.e. the pipes taking the bore water to individual homes) will be phased out, but the bores themselves will remain in operation.

**DO I NEED TO INSTALL A HOT WATER SYSTEM TODAY?** NO. The bore water reticulation system will be phased out and you will be given plenty of notice before this affects your residence.

**WILL THERE BE SUBSIDIES TO HELP ME BUY A HOT WATER SYSTEM?**

Many households already have hot water systems but for those who don't, council will be considering subsidies (along with available State and Federal Government subsidies) for hot water systems, plumbing and associated costs. There are already subsidies available for hot water systems through the State/Federal Government, however council will be considering offering additional subsidies for hot water systems, plumbing and associated works in the implementation plan. Council will also consider other associated costs for converting the residences from bore and river to water to blended river water only. This will be considered in the implementation plan and home owners/residents will be advised.

**WILL THE ALLOCATION FOR RIVER WATER INCREASE?**

The current river water allocation for a standard residential block is 1000 kilo-litres per year. Recognising that bore water is currently unmetered, council will consider increasing the allocation of river water in the implementation plan.

**WILL THE WATER BE SAFE TO DRINK AND WILL IT TASTE DIFFERENT?**

Yes the water will be safe to drink and blending at the recommended rate it is not expected to adversely affect the taste. Routine water testing regimes will continue to be conducted as is a standard practice.

**WHAT WILL WE DO WHEN THE RIVER RUNS DRY?** In Longreach's history the river has never been known to run 'dry' but prior to the weirs being constructed, the Thomson River had run low. In the event of the river running low or dry, we will use the bore water as a supplementary source of water which can be reticulated through the mains system. This cannot be achieved currently to every residence as not all have access bore water mains. Currently the Longreach township's use of bore water only constitutes 5% of the total water usage. By blending the bore water with the river water supply at responsible levels, we increase the amount of bore water use by almost double. So in fact, we increase our tolerance to drought through blending the bore water to the river water. More importantly, blending bore water with river water extends the river water supply to Longreach is drought-proof.

**DOES EVERYONE AGREE WITH THIS DECISION?** No not everyone will agree with this decision. Council held a public meeting earlier in the year at which time the majority in attendance indicated that they wanted to keep the bore water. The meeting could not however agree on how residents should pay for this. At this meeting, attendees were shown the increases on rates that would be likely should council attempt to keep the reticulation system for both river and bore water, and what this would mean to rates into the future.

A survey of residents was also conducted and showed that if bore water rates increased by 5%, 32% of those currently connected would disconnect, while an increase to bore water rates of 10% would see 44% of those currently connected disconnect from the system. At a 15% increase in bore water rates, some 50% of people would disconnect. This would mean that very few people would have been left on the system to fund the entire cost. This would require dramatic increases to the rates to recover costs, thus making rates unaffordable for those left on the system. Or alternatively, that council would have to charge people not using bore water for this service for the few that remained on that system.

The Longreach Regional Residents Incorporated had a deputation to council in February 2009 where they put forward their case to keep the bores and dual (river and bore) reticulation systems. This group did not at this time make any suggestions as to how residents could pay for this.

### **HOW WILL THIS AFFECT MY RATES?**

To fully implement this option, the charge for bore water will be removed completely (currently \$470 per annum) and the river water charge (currently \$608 per annum) will increase by approximately 6.2% (to approximately \$646). So if you currently pay for bore water your total water rates for the year are \$1078 (2008-9). Once fully implemented and bore water reticulation is phased out, your total rates for water will reduce by approximately \$432 to approximately \$646 and you will still have the benefit of having the bore water supply. This increase of approximately 6.2% does not consider increases by council to take into account CPI and the Local Government Cost Index as these would occur yearly in any case.

**WHERE TO FROM HERE?** The Implementation Plan will be developed by council officers over the next six months. The implementation plan will include things like subsidies, allocation levels, timelines, financial implications, rate effects, sourcing funding for a new bore to replace the current bores etc, and will be presented to council for their consideration. In the meantime, there will be no change to the existing situation. Council will correspond with residents and keep them informed once the implementation plan has been developed.

**WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?** If you are interested in more information on the history of this issue or current situation, please go to [www.longreach.qld.gov.au](http://www.longreach.qld.gov.au) where you can download the most recent report, a summary of previous reports and the presentation from the public meeting.