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(L-R) Tom O'Connor, National Operations Manager for LGI Limited (LGI) and Clarence Valley Council (CVC) Mayor Ray Smith, cut the ribbon to celebrate the completion of a major upgrade at the Grafton Regional Landfill site last week. Image: Emma Pritchard

COUNCIL INVESTS IN SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

EMMA PRITCHARD

A major upgrade at the Grafton Regional Landfill is helping Clarence Valley Council (CVC) reduce their carbon footprint while delivering sustainable results for the environment and economic benefits for the local community.

Aimed at capturing harmful methane (CH₄) gas emissions which are byproducts of the decomposing waste buried underground, 12 vertical gas extraction wells which extend 40m below the surface, along with five gas collection lines and close to 1km of underground pipes which are used to transport the captured CH₄

to an enclosed flaring unit on site where it is converted to carbon dioxide (CO₂), have recently been installed by LGI Limited (LGI), an Australian based and operated leader in carbon abatement who specialise in extracting and combusting landfill biogas.

Commissioned by CVC, the project, which began in 2015, has been delivered at minimal cost to ratepayers and has been described by CVC Mayor Ray Smith as a big step forward towards achieving Council's long-term net zero goal.

Speaking highly of Council's 10 year partnership with LGI as he toured the Grafton Regional Landfill site at Elland on July 31, Mayor Smith said along with

reducing methane gas emissions which he stated is "a win for the environment and the Clarence Valley community", he also revealed LGI has covered the costs to install, operate, and expand the gas extraction system which has saved Council "hundreds of thousands of dollars".

"That means this is an even better outcome for the local community," he said.

"This project at the Grafton Regional Landfill is a strong example of Council's commitment to a more sustainable future."

A potent greenhouse gas, the process of capturing CH₄ and converting it to CO₂ on site, is a measurable, immediate, and

irreversible methane abatement approach which allows Council and ratepayers to receive a share of the Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) which is generated by the project.

Over the past 10 years, LGI has abated close to 180000 tonnes of CO₂e for Council, which is equivalent to planting almost three million seedlings for the next decade, and 19 million m³ of biogas has been successfully captured at the Grafton Regional Landfill.

One of the biggest carbon emission sources for Council, biogas from landfills accounts for approximately 65 percent of emissions.

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INDEPENDENT

Council invests in sustainable future

Continued from page 1...

While Council receives a royalty share of ACCUs through the project, the local government body also has the option to sell them to create addition revenue or use them to offset emissions.

With close to 30 vertical gas extraction wells currently located at the Grafton Regional Landfill, 100 percent more of the methane gas emissions produced below the ground are being captured as a result of the major upgrade.

"It's a very exciting project," the Mayor said.

"To be here to see all the infrastructure that is now in place, and to see and learn about how the project is operating, how we're capturing and burning the methane gas emissions which is creating carbon credits that we (Council) will receive a share of through LGI and provide us with an income, this project isn't just about the economics, its also about the social and environmental benefits that are accruing.

"Council has a long-term goal

of reaching net zero emissions, and the recent upgrades which have been completed as part of this project at the Grafton Regional Landfill in partnership with LGI have brought us closer to achieving it."

Through partnerships with multiple councils across the state, LGI has been able to reduce CO2e emissions by more than 1.7 million tonnes, which is equivalent to planting 28.5 million seedlings for the next decade.

Over 180 million m3 of biogas has been captured at 11 different sites operated by LGI in NSW, with 296000 ACCUs created.

Tom O'Connor, National Operations Manager for LGI, said the 12 new gas extraction wells at the Grafton Regional Landfill are extracting harmful methane gas emissions from older parts of the location which have not previously been tapped, effectively doubling extraction figures over the last few months.

"We're aiming to create a good carbon abatement outcome, which is destruction of the CH4 in the landfill gas," he explained.

"The idea is once it has been captured, effectively vacuumed out of the ground and transported to the flaring unit and burned, it transforms into CO2 which is 28 times less harmful when omitted.

"Along with decreasing odour omissions, it also improves air quality.

"By removing the harmful gasses which are omitted from landfills, we're creating economic sustainability for councils we work in partnership with, and as well as helping them reduce their carbon footprint, these projects are incentivised as well through carbon credits, so we share the revenue of what is generated from the destruction of the CH4 which helps ratepayers."

Data released by LGI revealed landfills are responsible for

approximately 11 percent of the world's CH4 emissions, however, this figure is set to skyrocket to 70 percent by 2050 as the global population climbs.

Mr O'Connor said LGI will continue to operate, maintain, and expand the project at the Grafton Regional Landfill while delivering optimal gas extraction and carbon abatement.

He said LGI is open to creating further partnerships with other councils in NSW.

•Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) are issued by the Australian Government through a regulatory framework established under the Carbon Credit (Carbon Farming Initiative) Act 2011 (the CFI Act). The Clean Energy Regulator (CER) has primary responsibility for administering the ACCU scheme. For additional information, please scan the QR code:



Water filtration for valley and villages

RODNEY STEVENS

Over the next three years the design and construction of an \$84 million water filtration plant will occur, while two other Clarence Valley villages will get their own filtration plants.

The \$84 million filtration plant will be constructed at the Rushforth Road Water Treatment Plant at South Grafton, which supplies most of the Clarence Valley's drinking water, and two permanent water filtration plants are being installed at Glenreagh and Coutts Crossing.

Since 2019, the Clarence Valley Council's water supply undergone treatment for Cryptosporidium, and drinking water gets treated with chlorine at the Rushforth Road Water Treatment Plant, then the water is re-chlorinated at the 21 megalitre Maclean reservoir for Lower Clarence customers.

Council's latest edition of the Clarence magazine, volume 12, details the projects. The filtration plant must be installed to meet strict Australian Drinking Water Guidelines which were introduced in 2022.

"Filtration of town water supplies will add another layer of protection, further reducing potential risk to health by removing viruses and pathogens," Council says.

"Filtration will effectively manage risk of algae outbreak in source water, where chlorine alone would be ineffective.



The 16ML reservoir under construction at the Rushforth Road Water Treatment Plant. Image: CVC

"It will also reduce particles in the water (turbidity) sourced from either the Nymboida River or Shannon Creek Dam.

"This reduces the likelihood of a boil water alert being issued, particularly after heavy rainfall that stirs up sediment in the river and dam.

"It will replace the clarification lagoon that is currently used when required to reduce turbidity of water supplies."

Council has completed an Environmental Impact Statement for the installation of the new plant and consulted the community.

A new reservoir and chlorine contact tank will replace the current facilities which have reached the end of their operational life.

Council unanimously awarded a \$19.011 million tender for this project in April 2024 to Pensar Construction Group Pty Ltd.

"Installation of a new chlorine contact tank and 16 megalitre reservoir is currently under-

way and is located so pumping isn't required when the new filtration plant is installed, saving on power use," Council said.

As Council's Manager Technical Services, Greg Mashiah said at a public meeting in Yamba in February, filtration won't significantly improve the water that comes out of the tap in the Lower Clarence.

"Water users may still experience discolouration caused by sediments that exist in pipeline infrastructure, and chlorine will still be used as part of the disinfection process."

The \$84 million filtration plant will be funded by \$50 million in loans and \$34 million from Council's water fund reserves.

Council has extensively lobbied the NSW Government for grants or financial assistance toward the filtration plant but has been unable to secure funding.

If no outside funding can be secured, water rates, fees and charges would increase seven per-cent plus inflation each year for the next four years.

Meanwhile, in May, Council accepted a \$1.45 million tender for supply, delivery, and commissioning of two water treatment plants at Glenreagh and Coutts Crossing, each capable of processing up to 300 kilolitres a day.

The water treatment plants will be installed by Council staff and commissioning will occur with support from the contractor, who will also be responsible for maintaining the two plants for the next three years.



Richie with members of Maclean District Business Chamber

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