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KAP Herbert candidate backs job lot funding for algae wastewater upgrades

KATTER'S Australian Party candidate for Herbert, Clynton Hawks, wants federal government cash for macro-algae bioremediation upgrades to each of the region's wastewater treatment plants (WTP) to reduce nutrient discharge into the reef lagoon.

Mr Hawks said \$32 million would upgrade WTP plants in the Hinchinbrook, Charters Towers, Burdekin and Townsville council areas, including Palm Island and a much-needed facility at Magnetic Island.

Macro-algae bioremediation takes treated effluent and runs it through fresh water macro-algae ponds prior to discharge into the sea. The process remediates nitrogen and phosphorous which are significant threats to the ongoing health of the Great Barrier Reef.

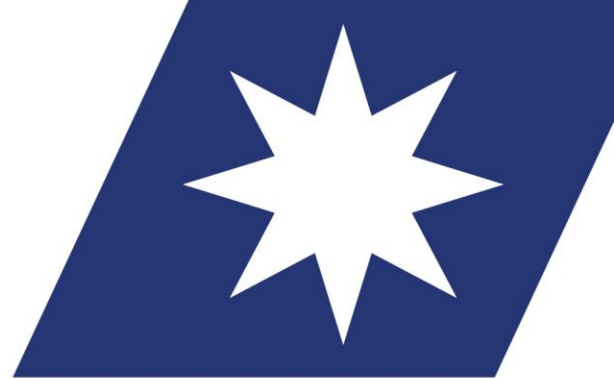
Mr Hawks said the technology has lower capital and operating costs than conventional systems designed to remove nitrogen and phosphorous from the discharge, and would work perfectly for places like Magnetic Island and Palm Island, where land constraints limit the range of options for treatment methods such as surface irrigation.

"The biggest constraint to the growth of the region is when you reach the absolute capacity limits of your basic infrastructure like potable water and sewage.

"Magnetic Island needs other options for its discharged effluent, as even the addition of a block of toilets is problematic for them.

"The Island's goal of boosting local tourism and developing more short and long-stay accommodation is stymied until the effluent issue is sorted.

"The options to pump the wastewater out to sea, truck it or pump it to the mainland are either cost prohibitive, impractical or just on the nose to locals who favour more ecologically-sensitive solutions.



“Bioremediation takes the treated effluent and gives it a spit-shine, taking out the nasties and releasing it into the reef lagoon as more or less clean water, and needs to be considered as a viable option.”

Mr Hawks said the federal LNP government committed almost a billion dollars in funding to the GBR to improve water quality, but has so far not committed to supporting municipal infrastructure upgrades across the board.

“The federal ALP has also committed significant funding to reef science yet has also overlooked some of these practical, proven options.”

Mr Hawks said increasing unconditional funding for local governments would be a priority of his if elected.

“As soon as I got the nod as KAP’s Herbert candidate I started looking around at what would really make this city great. I said we need a revamp of the CBD and was criticised for delving into local government issues.

“Well, the commonwealth government collects four dollars in tax revenue for every dollar collected by State and local governments combined, but sends only .55% of that back to the cities, towns and shires where that tax revenue is generated.

“So local government is very much a federal issue.”

Mr Hawks said a re-vamp of federal assistance grants (FAG) to peg local government funding at 1% of federal tax revenues would effectively see a doubling of grants to councils.

Mr Hawks said councils were increasingly carrying the burden of State and Federal environmental regulations, but not getting the financial support they needed to do their bit.

“Splashing federal cash on bioremediation in the reef catchment areas falls within the remit of the federal government so I will commit to working with Townsville Enterprise, the City and regional councils, to seeing that happen if elected.”

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