

2022 LGAQ Annual Conference – Motions template

Please use this template to prepare your motion, with text only – no images or tables.

Who is the key contact for this motion?*	Ali Moore, Manager Environment and Conservation
Do you have a contact at the LGAQ for this motion?	No
Submitting council*	Gladstone Regional Council
Supporting organisation (if applicable)	
Council resolution # *	
Date of council resolution*	Please select the date of resolution here
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Does this motion have state-wide relevance? * Yes	
Title of motion*	Environmental Legislation Changes Impact
Motion*	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The LGAQ calls on the State and Federal governments to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide transparent and targeted consultation with local governments regarding changes to environmental legislation that impact local governments’ sewerage assets, and b. Provide funding to assist local governments in maintaining and upgrading sewerage assets to meet evolving environmental legislation and protect the environment.
What is the desired outcome sought?* 200-word limit	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local governments are given the opportunity for transparent consultation of proposed amendments to environmental legislation by being made aware of changes and their implications as early as possible. 2. Local governments are allowed the opportunity to provide feedback on proposed changes. 3. State and Federal governments support funding for local governments to upgrade and maintain sewerage assets in response to evolving environmental standards ensuring compliance and positive environmental outcomes.

Background*
350-word limit

In September 2021, the Department Environment and Science (DES) advised Queensland Water of potential changes to Queensland's environmental legislation.

In May 2022, Queensland Water were given permission to share *some* of this information with the industry group Sewerage and Water Environmental Advisory Panel (SWEAP) and provide joint feedback to DES. DES have permitted SWEAP members to access and provide feedback, however not all Councils are members of SWEAP. Over 300 Environmental Authorities (EA) for public sewerage schemes exist in Queensland. Consultation processes must be broadened to include all impacted stakeholders.

Environmental legislation changes can significantly impact asset planning and sustainability; therefore, any change should be thoroughly consulted on prior to commencing the Parliamentary process to give voice to the potential public costs and risks.

Maintaining, operating, and upgrading sewerage assets for communities, continues to be one of the greatest expenses for local governments. To manage these high costs, assets are designed for lifecycles of 30-50 years, and extensive modelling and planning are undertaken to allow capital and operational costs to be dispersed over the lifetime of the asset.

For local governments to successfully adapt, legislative changes must consider:

1. That any changes incurring significant financial contribution from public funds will require funding support to enable compliance, delivery of critical services and meeting of environmental outcomes.
2. That imposing timeframes shorter than asset lifespans can expose Councils to significant costs.
3. Whether the matter of concern is better managed by the administering authority (i.e. DES) rather than by individual EA holders (i.e. local government or private entity).
 - For example, improving technology at nearly 100 small treatment plants (EA managed) in the Great Barrier Reef catchments costing \$1 billion would not provide as much value as the \$400 million Queensland Government reviews (AA managed) have indicated (refer Queensland Water "Sewerage treatment plants in Great Barrier Reef catchments, March 2017").
4. The costs of mandatory Environmental Investigations will vary depending on the complexity of plants and EAs. The standard price for small plant evaluation is approximately \$10,000. The costs could be significantly higher for complex EAs. Most plants are older than 10 years.

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