



MEDIA RELEASE

30 May 2017

SAVING THE ENVIRONMENT AND MONEY WITH CATCHMENT IMPROVEMENTS

Hunter Water is challenging the status quo of wastewater management with a Hunter Valley project that sees waterways rehabilitated in place of a multimillion dollar treatment plant upgrade.

Paxton Wastewater Treatment Works is one of Hunter Water's most technologically advanced plants, and treats wastewater (sewage) from the Millfield, Ellalong and Paxton communities. The treated wastewater discharged from the plant is the cleanest in the Hunter and flows into Congewai Creek.

With the creek in a deteriorated condition, traditional thinking would see a further upgrade to the already advanced Paxton plant at a cost of millions.

However, in a first for New South Wales, Hunter Water is delaying the need to further upgrade the plant and saving \$1 million by remediating the creek in partnership with local landowners.

Hunter Water Executive Manager Strategy and Planning Darren Cleary said the initiative was the first step in a new direction for the utility that if applied elsewhere in the network would save millions of dollars and improve the environment.

"Hunter Water is dedicated to keeping our waterways healthy and clean. One way of doing this is to use technology to treat wastewater to increasingly high standards as growth occurs.

"The traditional way of thinking would have seen us further upgrade our treatment plant at a cost of millions of dollars. However, there are a number of issues, such as a lack of riparian vegetation and stock entering the creek, which are also a significant contributors to poor water quality.

"At Paxton we've opted for an innovative solution, designing a catchment management program that will improve the health of the creek, while at the same time promoting biodiversity and improving visual amenity.

"The catchment improvement program involves remediating the creek by vegetating its banks, installing fencing to keep stock away, and a weed management program. The latest modelling and research has shown us that this will reduce nutrients in the creek just as effectively as an upgrade to our treatment plant, at a fraction of the cost.

"The program is a partnership with Local Land Services and landowners, and brings benefits not only to the creek, but to the local community.

"We'll be looking to run similar projects in the future which will save money for our customers and improve our local environment.

"This project demonstrates the value of challenging established ways of thinking, and we'll be looking for new solutions to old challenges across the board," he said.

The first round of catchment improvement program works is underway and will continue into 2018.

Nick Kaiser | 0411 485 204 | nick.kaiser@hunterwater.com.au