

# Merimbula Sewage Treatment Plant Upgrade, Increased Reuse & Ocean Outfall

When residents and visitors in Merimbula, Berrambool, Pambula, Pambula Beach, South Pambula and Millingandi flush their toilets, do their washing, have a shower or bath, run their dishwashers or wash their hands, where does it all go? Each year, around 700 million litres ends up at the Merimbula Sewage Treatment Plant.

## Did you know?

Council, on average, reuses about a quarter of what comes into the Merimbula STP, however 100% reuse is not possible.

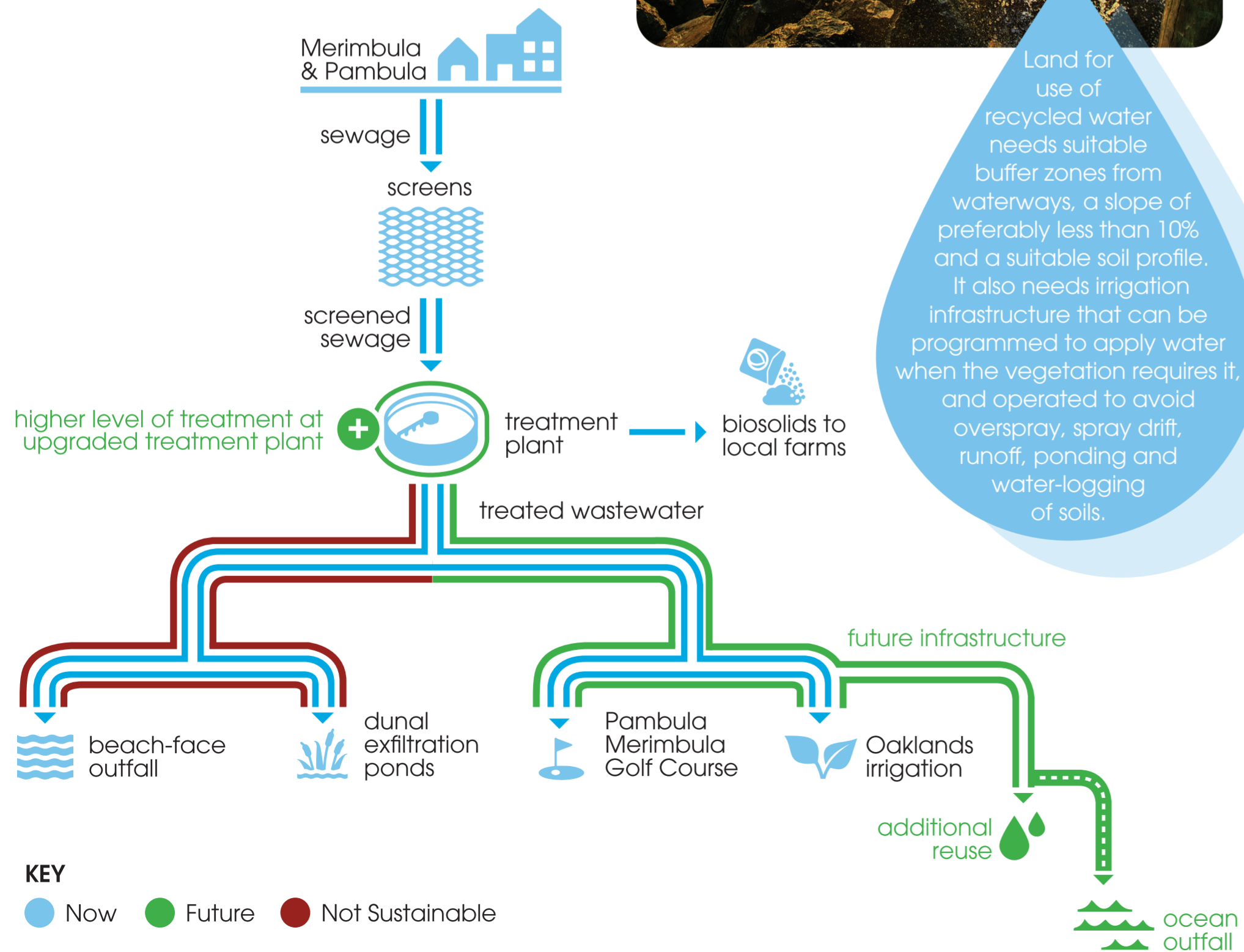
- We've been distributing recycled water to the Pambula Merimbula Golf Club for over 40 years.
- Irrigation to Oaklands Farm began in 2013.
- Biosolids used to go to landfill but as part of a new initiative we are supplying a contractor who is working with local farms and the NSW EPA to use biosolids as a nutrient-rich organic soil conditioner.

## The problem

Council discharges excess treated wastewater through a beach-face outfall pipe on Merimbula Beach or into an area of the nearby dunes. This area is significant to our Aboriginal community and has high environmental value. Dunal exfiltration and a beach-face outfall are no longer appropriate or sustainable.



Land for use of recycled water needs suitable buffer zones from waterways, a slope of preferably less than 10% and a suitable soil profile. It also needs irrigation infrastructure that can be programmed to apply water when the vegetation requires it, and operated to avoid overspray, spray drift, runoff, ponding and water-logging of soils.



## The solution

- Upgrade Merimbula STP so we can have better quality treated wastewater.
- Increased reuse, possibly at Pambula Sporting Complex.
- Build a new ocean outfall.

The amount of reuse varies according to our climate, and in years of high rainfall, the golf club and Oaklands need less irrigation. Existing land use and topography also influence reuse options. However, increased reuse will not remove the need for a sustainable disposal system at Merimbula.

A Community Working Group and AECOM have been collaborating to consider the ocean outfall's alignment, depth and how far it will extend into the bay. They are also discussing the specifics of the upgrades to Merimbula STP.



Merimbula STP already uses a biological process to treat wastewater. At the upgraded plant, we're aiming to treat with ultra violet light, minimise chemical use, and to further reduce nutrients including nitrogen and phosphorus.

## How did we get here?

Over the past 10 years we have thoroughly investigated various options with specialist environmental consultants AECOM, the NSW EPA and community members. We've considered many factors such as the shape of Merimbula Bay, the need to protect our lakes and vital oyster industry, and our duty to safeguard public health.

### Ongoing Community Consultation

- 2009** NSW EPA directs Council to start investigating better disposal options. Council appoints specialist consultants AECOM to begin options study.
- 2011** Community Focus Group forms.
- 2013** Community Focus Group recommends to Council that a new Ocean Outfall is the most sustainable and viable option to disperse excess treated wastewater from Merimbula STP.
- 2014** Council adopts an effluent management strategy that includes upgrades to Merimbula STP and construction of an ocean outfall. The EPA amends Council's operating licence for the Merimbula STP to include a requirement to construct an ocean outfall and upgrades to the plant.
- 2016** Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Merimbula Sewage Treatment Plant and Ocean Outfall) Order 2016 issued under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, section 115U (4).
- Sept 2017** First dye dispersion test in Merimbula Bay. Flora and fauna study conducted.
- Nov 2017** Concept and environmental assessment via drop-in community information sessions and briefing sessions for key stakeholders.
- Dec 2017** Community Working Group (CWG) established and first meeting. Marine hydrographic survey.
- May 2018** Second dye dispersion test in Merimbula Bay.
- Oct 2018** Heritage and Aboriginal significance investigations conducted.
- Nov 2018** Geotechnical investigations conducted.
- 2019** Marine ecology studies ongoing.



## Find out more

- Call** toll free 1800 029 478
- Email** [merimbulaSTPupgrade@begavalley.nsw.gov.au](mailto:merimbulaSTPupgrade@begavalley.nsw.gov.au)
- Visit** [www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au/merimbulaSTPupgrade](http://www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au/merimbulaSTPupgrade)
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