

Australia's largest recycled water irrigation scheme showcased at Parliament House

The Lockyer Valley and Somerset have taken their case to build Australia's largest recycled water irrigation scheme to Queensland's decision-makers at Parliament House.

Queensland politicians were given a taste of locally grown produce at a project showcase yesterday, as part of the push to secure the Lockyer Valley and Somerset Water Security Scheme.

The scheme is seeking to use the Western Corridor Recycled Water Scheme to significantly boost food production for Queensland and the nation and underpin regional prosperity.

The Queensland Government provided \$5 million for the project to undertake pre-construction works in the most recent State Budget. The project has also been included as a key initiative in the State Government's signature primary industries policy, *Prosper 2050*.

The Lockyer Valley and Somerset regional councils, growers and key peak industry groups joined the showcase to promote the project and the benefits it will deliver.

Member for Lockyer Jim McDonald, who hosted the Parliamentary event, described the project as "a game changer for my region, for our State and the nation".

"This project will significantly enhance Queensland's and Australia's sovereign food security," Mr McDonald said.

"More than 120 growers have already signed up to be foundation customers demonstrating strong farmer support for the scheme."

Lockyer Valley Mayor Tanya Milligan said the scheme would help secure the future economic prosperity of the region, encourage the next generation of farmers to stay on the land, and strengthen food security for future generations.

"The scheme will deliver Australia's largest and most reliable recycled water irrigation scheme, providing real water security for our region and our farmers for the first time," Mayor Milligan said.

"We are talking about using wastewater which is currently being discharged into our waterways and ultimately Moreton Bay. It will be treated to the highest quality recycled water to grow more high-quality food than ever before. Frankly, it's a no brainer."

Somerset Mayor Jason Wendt said the economic benefits to the region and State were too significant to ignore.

"Our initial economic assessment shows this new water supply will increase production by \$270 million, taking our region's fresh food production to almost \$1.7 billion a year. It will secure 4000 existing permanent and seasonal jobs and add almost 600 new jobs," Mayor Wendt said.

"As the Queensland Primary Industries Minister Tony Perrett recently said, there is no downside to this project. I could not agree more."

The scheme forms part of the Water Initiatives in the Lockyer Valley commitment being delivered under the South East Queensland (SEQ) City Deal. The SEQ City Deal is a partnership by the Australian Government, Queensland Government and Council of Mayors (SEQ).

The project will next month deliver its Optimisation Assessment Report or updated detailed business case to the Queensland and Australian governments for capital funding consideration.

To find out more about the Water Collaborative, visit lvandswatercollaborative.com.au

Key project goals:

- Secure Queensland's most important horticulture and food production region. The Lockyer Valley and Somerset provide 30 per cent of Queensland's and 5 per cent of the nation's fresh produce.
- Increase agricultural output in the Lockyer Valley and Somerset by \$270 million to almost \$1.7 billion annually, to help feed a growing Queensland and nation.
- Protect existing workforce of almost 4,000 including full-time and seasonal workers and add an additional 600 full-time jobs.
- Provide one of the most reliable sources of recycled water in the country.
- First large-scale use of urban water infrastructure to grow food by operating the significantly under-utilised Western Corridor Recycled Water Scheme.
- Turn wastewater currently discharged into SEQ waterways and Moreton Bay into high-quality recycled water to enhance Queensland's food security and economy.

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