

Name of policy:	Recycled Water		
Adoption by Council:	26 June 2024	Minute number:	248/2024
Last review date:	January 2024		
Review timeframe:	2 years		
Next scheduled review date:	January 2026		
Related legislation:	<i>Australian Guidelines for Water Recycling</i> <i>NSW Guidance for Recycled Water Management Systems</i> <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> <i>Water Management Act 2000</i>		
Associated policies/documents:	MidCoast Council Climate Change Policy Community Strategic Plan - <i>MidCoast 2022-2032: Shared Vision, Shared Responsibility</i> MidCoast Council Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy - <i>Our Water Our Future 2050</i>		
Responsible division:	Infrastructure and Engineering Services		

Background

The use of recycled water is a nationally accepted approach to responsible water and environmental management and forms part of MidCoast Council's commitment to water conservation. The MidCoast Council region faces a complex and multifaceted water security challenge, balancing a surging demand of water use from residents, tourism, and agriculture, amidst increasingly unpredictable rainfall patterns and climate change. Using recycled water for non-drinking purposes is a great way to reduce the amount of drinking water used.

MidCoast Council operates 10 recycled water schemes across the Mid North Coast. The Taree, Wingham, Coopernook, Lansdowne, Stroud, and Gloucester schemes produce recycled water for irrigating farms. The Bulahdelah, Harrington, Hawks Nest and Tuncurry recycled water schemes are used to irrigate open spaces such as golf courses and sporting fields. The recycled water from all these schemes meets the requirements of the Australian Guidelines for Water Recycling.

Policy objective

This policy applies to the management and operation of MidCoast Council's recycled water systems. The policy document and its application relate to recycled water for non-drinking purposes.

Policy statement

In recognition of the climate change crisis, MidCoast Council is committed to ensuring the safe, sustainable, and efficient use of recycled water for non-drinking purposes. This commitment contributes to public health and safety, water security, environmental protection, and economic viability.

Policy coverage

All MidCoast Council personnel involved in the supply of recycled water, including the Mayor, Councillors, General Manager, directors, managers, coordinators, and staff, are responsible for understanding, implementing, maintaining, and improving the recycled water management system in line with this policy. Likewise, users of recycled water are responsible for understanding and utilising recycled water according to this policy.

Strategic Plan link

The development of the Recycled Water Policy directly aligns with Community Outcome 2 of Council's Community Strategic Plan, "An integrated and considered approach to managing our natural and built environments", specifically:

<i>2.4 We have an adequate and reliable water supply</i>	<i>2.4.1 Manage all elements of the water cycle to deliver an adequate and reliable water supply that meets community needs now and into the future</i>
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Policy content

MidCoast Council, in collaboration with NSW Health, the NSW Environment Protection Authority, and relevant stakeholders, commits to:

1. Prioritise Public and Environmental Health:
 - Recognise the principal importance of protecting public health, the environment, and water resources.
 - Ensure recycled water is 'fit for purpose' for its intended end-use.
2. Foster Collaboration:
 - Maintain communication and partnerships with all relevant agencies involved in water resource management.
 - Engage users of recycled water to understand and fulfil their responsibilities regarding responsible use.
3. Build Trust and Transparency:
 - Regularly monitor recycled water quality and provide timely, accessible information to instil confidence in recycled water use.
 - Calculate recycled water charges to partially recover costs of production, operation, and distribution, and set charges to encourage recycled water use.
 - Publish the recycled water charges in Council's scheduled 'Fees and Charges'.
4. Embrace Continuous Improvement:
 - Participate in and support advancements in recycled water use to promote a deeper understanding of related challenges.

5. Ensure Operational Excellence:

- Guarantee MidCoast Council's sewage and recycled water treatment plant operators are appropriately trained and experienced in relevant recycled water management practices.

6. Promote Sustainable Development

- Evaluate all proposed recycled water schemes and initiatives against the principles of ecological sustainable development, considering long-term economic, social, and environmental sustainability.
- Aim to recognise and capture the long-term economic value of recycled water through cost recovery principles.

MidCoast Council does not guarantee the uninterrupted supply of recycled water and reserves the right to reduce, interrupt, or discontinue supply to any premises at any time, without prior notice. However, where possible, we will provide notice to recycled water customers in the event of scheduled maintenance or shutdowns that will affect recycled water supply.

Definitions

Economic Viability: *The ability of a system or activity to generate sufficient financial resources to sustain its operations and achieve its goals.*

Environmental Protection: *The practice of conserving and protecting natural resources and ecosystems to ensure their long-term health and viability.*

Fit for Purpose: *Recycled water that meets the quality standards required for its intended end-use, as determined by relevant guidelines and legislation.*

Recycled Water: *Treated effluent from Council sewage treatment plants treated to meet specific standards for non-drinking water purposes such as irrigating grassed areas i.e.: agricultural areas, golf courses and sporting fields.*

Stakeholders: *Individuals or groups with an interest in or affected by recycled water use, including residents, businesses, industries, and government agencies.*

Water Security: *The reliable availability of an adequate supply of water of acceptable quality to meet community, economic, and environmental needs now and into the future.*

References and related documents

- Australian Guidelines for Water Recycling
- Local water utility performance monitoring database | DPIE Water (nsw.gov.au): <https://water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/local-water-utilities/local-water-utility-performance>
- *Local Government Act 1993*
- Council's Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy; *Our Water Our Future 2050*
- Council's Climate Change Policy
- Council's Community Strategic Plan; *MidCoast 2022-2032: Shared Vision, Shared Responsibility*
- NSW Guidance for Recycled Water Management Systems
- *Water Management Act 2000*

Responsible officer (position)

Manager Water Planning and Assets