

**SUPPLEMENTARY ITEMS**

**COUNCIL MEETING ON 29 MAY 2025**

16. **OFFICERS' REPORTS:**

16.4 Update - Healthy Land and Water Membership.....3



Doc ID No: A11628492

*This matter has been determined to be of a significant nature and approval has been given to refer this report to the Council as a supplementary item.*

ITEM: 16.4

SUBJECT: UPDATE - HEALTHY LAND AND WATER MEMBERSHIP

AUTHOR: EXECUTIVE SUPPORT OFFICER

DATE: 28 MAY 2025

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report proposes that the Council revisit the previous committee and amended council recommendations regarding the annual membership payment to Healthy Land and Water (HLW), primarily in relation to the Environmental Health Monitoring Program (EHMP). The review provides information to assist in an objective decision around whether Council should continue or cease funding this annual payment based on benefits to the environment, the Ipswich ratepayer, financial value, and strategic considerations.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- A. That council adopts the recommendation as presented in its original form in the officers' report dated 15 October 2024, being;**  
  
**‘That Council resolve to cease its membership of Healthy Land and Water and no longer make the annual membership payment’**
- B. That should Recommendation A not be adopted, that Council pays its Healthy Land and Water membership for 2024-2025 and reviews its ongoing membership in 2025-2026 following the outcomes of the State Government review of the regional water quality monitoring program due by December 2025.**

### **RELATED PARTIES**

Healthy Land and Water Board of Directors

### **IFUTURE THEME**

A Trusted and Leading Organisation

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT/BACKGROUND**

A report was submitted to the Environment and Sustainability Committee 15 October 2024 concerning the membership of Ipswich City Council to Healthy Land and Water (HLW) with the following recommendation:

*That Council resolves to cease its membership of Healthy Land and Water and no longer make an annual financial membership payment.*

At Council Ordinary meeting 24 October 2024, an amended motion was resolved as:

*That Council's membership of Healthy Land and Water be held over to a future council meeting to allow council, in consultation with councillors, to undertake community consultation and consider all relevant matters, including the membership status of our neighbouring councils of Healthy Land and Water.*

In the intervening period, the following engagement has occurred, being:

- General Manager Environment and Sustainability held discussions with nominated community representatives
- Council officers continued engagement with senior officers of Healthy Land and Water
- Council officers engaged with other SEQ councils
- A presentation by Healthy Land and Water CEO to Councillors in May 2025

The Natural Environment Branch is also progressing work on an Ipswich City Council-specific waterway health monitoring plan.

Further ongoing discussions remain in place with the Department of Environment, Science, Technology, and Innovation (DESTI) around Council's monitoring needs and how any future monitoring work done by Council can 'nest' or feed into a future regional picture or program. The State Department is currently reviewing the SEQ Water Quality Investment Program (incorporating the HLW funding for the EHMP amongst other things) based on recent feedback from stakeholders and shifting needs and drivers of the region.

Irrespective of the annual membership contribution, council continues to work with HLW on a case-by-case project basis, delivering outcomes such as waterway stabilisation projects, koala tree plantings, and fire management workshops as part of the regional fire and biodiversity consortium (FABCON). Presently, there are ongoing partnership agreements in place or being developed between the two entities. Council contributes significant officer time, in-kind contributions and direct financial investment in these joint projects.

As was the case in 2014-2015 when Council elected not to pay the membership or EHMP contribution, the programs and opportunities to partner on a case-by-case basis continued to run and exist. In many instances, given the operating model of HLW, they regularly receive grant-based and direct funding for projects and programs from the Queensland and Australian Government, for which they are reliant on local Governments and private partners to be able to deliver.

A few neighbouring councils have already or are planning to step back from making the annual membership contribution. They have expressed a range of factors have informed their decision including: the value for money proposition, competing budget priorities,

misalignment on the direction or services of Healthy Land and Water with their strategies, or to continue in the delivery of their own alternative programs.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

This report and its recommendations are consistent with the following legislative provisions:  
*Local Government Act 2009*

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Nil

### **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There is reputational risk associated with cessation of annual funding to Healthy Land and Water. As the recognised 'Regional NRM group' (now referred to as the peak environmental body) for South East Queensland, payments are perceived by many as an affirmative action and representation of the council's position on environmental issues. However, contextually this should be considered also alongside the broader picture around the financial position of both organisations, the management of public funds, general increase in waterway and catchment management investments by council and the fact that Council is currently working with HLW on a number of projects and has in the past engaged them as a commercial service provider.

The decision around making the membership payment will not impact Council's ability to engage or partner with Healthy Land and Water on a case-by-case business or partnership opportunity basis. It is also assumed that Healthy Land and Water will engage with council each year to understand the status of the membership and future intentions.

Council's targeted and strategic investment in managing the environment, waterways and catchment health continues to grow, and with that so do the requirements to demonstrate that its investment is offering value for money to the rate payer, both in terms of where that money is directly placed on-ground and to monitor and manage the impacts of that investment. Depending on the outcomes of Council's own monitoring program (underway) funding for the membership could be redirected to assisting with localised monitoring and support of grass roots local conservation groups who assist with data collection and citizen science programs.

### **FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

Based upon available data Council's annual contribution of approximately \$115,000 represents a very small proportion of HLW's total annual revenue. The payment is indexed based on ratable properties, and as such, the cost to council(s) increases year on year.

Given there is no direct reporting or acquittal on exactly where the membership contribution is invested or how much is spent directly on waterways or monitoring or other projects or benefits to the Ipswich area it's difficult to discern based on available data.

Funding for the membership comes from the Environment and Sustainability annual budget and the council's general revenue. It is presently budgeted for this financial year and included but proposed as a saving for the 2025-2026 FY.

## **COMMUNITY AND OTHER CONSULTATION**

Officers continue close working relationships with the following parties regarding Healthy Land and Water, the Queensland Government's EHMP program and the ongoing review and the wider water quality monitoring needs of local government(s):

- Department of Environment Science, Technology and Innovation (DESTI)
- South East Queensland Council of Mayors (Resilient Rivers Initiative)
- Neighbouring councils
- Specialist consultants

Discussions were held with nominated community representatives. These discussions explained much of the above and offered a chance for those that raised concerns to express sentiment around their support for local monitoring and potentially community-led action.

Council officers have continued engagement with senior officers and members of Healthy Land and Water and neighbouring councils as well as seeking advice from third parties and professional experts individually and through the ongoing State-run review. Work is continuing on an Ipswich City Council-specific waterway health monitoring plan in partnership with other councils.

## **CONCLUSION**





A report was presented at the Environment and Sustainability Committee 15 October 2024 recommending council ceases funding its membership payment of Healthy Land and Water. The report outlined the reasons for ceasing the membership payment and noted that stepping back from membership contributions does not preclude Council from collaborating with Healthy Land and Water on individual projects, programs, or partnership initiatives. Council is continuously collaborating with HLW on a case-by-case or fee-for-service basis on a number of koala threat management and waterway improvements projects across the city.

Following the Council Ordinary Meeting on 24 October 2024, council officers have undertaken consultation with councillors, targeted community representatives, neighbouring councils, and HLW staff. HLW were invited and presented to Councillors in May 2025.

## HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACTS	
OTHER DECISION	
(a) What is the Act/Decision being made?	
(b) What human rights are affected?	No human rights are impacted
(c) How are the human rights limited?	Not applicable
(d) Is there a good reason for limiting the relevant rights? Is the limitation fair and reasonable?	Not applicable
(e) Conclusion	The decision is consistent with human rights.

## ATTACHMENTS AND CONFIDENTIAL BACKGROUND PAPERS

1.	Ipswich City Council Membership to Healthily Land and Water 2024 - 2025 <a href="#"></a> <a href="#"></a>
2.	Ecosystem Health Monitoring Program Value Assessment October 2022) <a href="#"></a> <a href="#"></a>

Louise Randall

**EXECUTIVE SUPPORT OFFICER**

I concur with the recommendations contained in this report.

Phil A. Smith

**MANAGER, NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

I concur with the recommendations contained in this report.

Kaye Cavanagh

**GENERAL MANAGER (ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY)**

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ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE  
MEETING AGENDA

15 OCTOBER  
2024

Doc ID No: A10691412

ITEM: 2

SUBJECT: IPSWICH CITY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP TO HEALTHLY LAND AND WATER 2024 -  
2025

AUTHOR: MANAGER, NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

DATE: 20 SEPTEMBER 2024

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a report concerning Ipswich City Council and the regional Natural Resource Management group for South East Queensland - Healthy Land and Water, specifically the current and future membership and funding arrangements which have been under review for 2 consecutive years and the value it offers to Council.

### RECOMMENDATION/S

Amended Council Ordinary Meeting of 24 October 2024

**That Council's membership of Healthy Land and Water be held over to a future council meeting to allow council, in consultation with councillors, to undertake community consultation and consider all relevant matters including the membership status of our neighbouring councils of Healthy Land and Water.**

### RELATED PARTIES

Healthy Land and Water

### IFUTURE THEME

Natural and Sustainable

### PURPOSE OF REPORT/BACKGROUND

Healthy Land and Water (HLW) is the recognised regional natural resource management (NRM) body that is focussed on improving and protecting Southeast Queensland's environment, catchments, and waterways. As a non-government organisation they are financially supported through membership and partner contributions, State and Commonwealth Government funding and grants, as well as running a commercial 'fee for service' business.

The remit of Healthy Land and Water currently includes:

- Provision of design and best practise stormwater and erosion and sediment control advice for urban stormwater management through the Water By Design Program



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(including the recent audit of Ipswich City Council's Erosion and Sediment Control compliance function)

- Economic, Social and Ecological monitoring and modelling of catchment condition
- Estuarine marine and freshwater environmental condition data collection, storage, and provision
- A number of expert panels and the hosting of the Southeast Queensland Monitoring and Evaluation Steering Committee
- Production and publication of annual report cards and waterway health grades
- Provision of advice and guidance around recreational risk from water quality through the healthy waterway program

Council's contribution goes towards the provision of a range of regional services and products. Primarily, membership covers the Ecosystem Health Monitoring Program and the associated report card into the health of the Bremer River. These results are published along with all other report cards for catchments across Southeast Queensland to provide a regional context of the health of the waterways and Moreton Bay.

Council has generally provided annual membership payments as part of a three-year funding agreement as proposed by HLW. For the past 2 years, Council has supported a move to a one-year commitment on the provision that officers assess and measure the value of the membership and the services provided directly in relation to the needs of council. An assessment was carried out by officers in 2022 (Attachment 1). Specifically in the context of its requirements for waterway monitoring to inform current and future investment, management actions and their efficiency.

After broad internal and intra-council consultation throughout this period and the synthesis of a needs report (Attachment 3), it is the opinion of the subject matter experts that, in relation to informative monitoring and reporting Council does not receive value for money in investing in the regional EHMP program. Its needs are not being met, nor can they, through the regional temporal and spatial scale and regional focus of the program. Rather than duplicate investment in monitoring, it is recommended that the membership payment not be paid and focus be placed on working with consultants and the broader stakeholder working groups to design and cost a localised program to meet Council's needs moving forward.

Council's roles and needs have changed throughout the life of the EHMP program. As has the local context and pressures on our waterways and the urgency with which this needs to be addressed. At inception, Moreton Bay and Catchments Water Management Partnership established: 1998, known later as Healthy Waterways, was initiated by the Policy Council of the Brisbane River Management Group in response to the objectives and scientific strategies found in the Brisbane River and Moreton Bay Wastewater Management Study program.

The Healthy Waterways program (later to become Healthy Land and Water) developed the Ecosystem Health Monitoring Program and report card which served to unite the South East Queensland Councils, State Government and Utility suppliers with common goal focussed on improving and protecting Moreton bay, an invaluable and internationally renowned wetland marine sanctuary. In its first few years the monitoring and report card successfully identified point source pollution from sewage treatment plants as a driving factor for the health of the

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regions waterways and Morton bay. Highlighting and publishing this in turn resulted in the upgrade of many of the treatment plants and subsequently saw some of the biggest individual improvements in the health of SEQ Waterways over the last 40 years.

Since this time, the role and mandate of both Healthy Waterways and Local governments has changed considerably. June 2016 saw the amalgamation of Healthy Waterways and SEQ Catchments to form a new joint NRM body in Healthy Land and Water. Councils across SEQ have grown and developed capacity and capability as well as inherited responsibility for waterways and catchment management through the delivery of on ground projects and the provisions under the State Planning Policy around managing Stormwater and Environmental Values.

As a result councils across the region have monitoring and evaluation needs of their own to inform future investment, management intervention or identify sensitive or valuable areas that may require protection through the likes of the planning scheme or voluntary conservation agreements. One such contemporary example of this is the ICC platypus eDNA monitoring program tracking the presence or absence of our platypus populations in response to erosion and sediment inputs, floods and developmental pressures. Another example is the requirements to understand and quantify the catchment conditions and nutrient input for Councils Offsite Stormwater Improvement program (OSQIP) which has seen \$11 million invested over the past 10 years on reducing pollutants.

These requirements are likely to increase as we move forwards with other major investments streams and programs such as the Resilient Rivers Initiative through the Council of Mayors and the federally funded urban rivers program, each of which will have their own monitoring and evaluation needs. These needs will not be met by the EHMP in its current form.

EHMP as a standalone regional monitoring program and a flagship reporting program set a standard for regional waterway/ecological reporting which has been instrumental in understanding Moreton Bay and paved the way for similar reporting programs across the world. It is delivered in partnership and behalf of State and to that end is of more value to the Queensland Government than local Councils.

As per a committee report tabled for the 22/23 Financial year, council took the step of moving away from the previously supported and regular agreement of Funding HLW in favour of a 12-month agreement. This was subject to council reviewing the value for money that the previous agreement offered to council specifically regarding the Ecosystem Health Monitoring Program (EHMP) and report card.

During that year a value assessment was produced (Attachment 1) and an informal discussion group was established between local government officers in this space to discuss our individual needs and requirements. Those discussions have been constructing and have continued into guiding the development of the monitoring plan for ICC.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

This report and its recommendations are consistent with the following legislative provisions:

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*Local Government Act 2009*

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

None were identified.

**RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There is reputational risk associated with the public perceptions of removing annual funding to Healthy Land and Water as the acknowledged Regional NRM group, as a negative environmental stance. However considerations around the financial position of both organisations and the management of public funds suggests that these perceptions would not be justified.

Council's partnership payment of approximately \$100,000 per year constitutes less than 1% of the annual revenue of Healthy Land and Water which in 2022 year received a total income of \$17,747,620 17.

Based upon the 2022/2023 year the combined local government contributions accumulate to around 10% of the total revenue.

Council's tactical and strategic investment in managing waterways and catchment health continues to grow and in doing so, so do its requirements to demonstrate that its investment is offering value for money to the rate payer both in terms of where that money is directly placed on-ground and also to monitor and manage the impacts of that investment.

The decision to not fund the membership payment will not impact Council's ability to engage or partner with Healthy Land and Water on a case-by-case business or partnership opportunity basis. It is assumed that Healthy Land and Water will engage with councils each year to understand the status of the membership and future intentions.

**FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

The annual membership payment saving will be used to fund a local water quality monitoring program that will be of great value to council in measuring the condition of Ipswich's waterways.

Internal and external considerations were given to the value offered through membership investment and it was determined that this funding is better expended to provide local ongoing improvement and or monitoring at a scale which provides meaningful feedback to guide targeted future investment.

**COMMUNITY AND OTHER CONSULTATION**

Council officers have engaged with Healthy Land and Water over the past 12 months regarding their value proposition.

Council officers have engaged with other SEQ councils, some of whom have also withdrawn membership.

**CONCLUSION**

It is recommended that Ipswich City Council does not continue to contribute an annual membership payment to Healthy Land and Water. More effective and efficient ways of monitoring and evaluating water quality to guide current and future investment in waterway and catchment management can be achieved through a local monitoring program.

Stepping back from the membership contributions does not preclude or limit Council's ability to work with the NRM group in particular projects, programs or partnership initiatives on a case by case or fee for service basis.

**HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACTS	
OTHER DECISION	
(a) What is the Act/Decision being made?	That Ipswich City Council do not pay the Healthy Land and Water Membership contribution for the 2024/2025 year.
(b) What human rights are affected?	No human rights impacted.
(c) How are the human rights limited?	Not applicable
(d) Is there a good reason for limiting the relevant rights? Is the limitation fair and reasonable?	Not applicable
(e) Conclusion	The decision is consistent with human rights.

**ATTACHMENTS AND CONFIDENTIAL BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1.	Ecosystem Health Monitoring Program Value Assessment October 2022
2.	Final Report March 2024

Phil A. Smith

**MANAGER, NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

I concur with the recommendations contained in this report.

Kaye Cavanagh

**GENERAL MANAGER (ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY)**

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Environment and Sustainability

**Discussion Paper:**

**A high-level assessment of the Ecosystem Health Monitoring Program's (EHMP) value to Ipswich City Council (ICC)**

**Objective**

Provide an assessment of the EHMP's value to the ICC with the aim of supporting any decisions related to the continued financial support of the program.

**Background**

The Ecosystem Health Monitoring Program (EHMP) is a regional waterway monitoring program established over 20 years ago to assess the health of South East Queensland's major catchments, river estuaries and Moreton Bay. The Program is coordinated by Healthy Land and Water (HLW) and is supported largely by the state and local governments. As described below, the EHMP broader aims are to inspire action, prioritise areas for investment and assess effectiveness of the management actions towards targets. The EHMP also helps ensure the State government meet its REMP requirements. Every year, the results are synthesised and communicated through the Healthy Land and Water Report Card.

Ipswich City Council has supported the EHMP since its inception in 2001, with the primary deliverable from this partnership being the annual report card grade for the Bremer River and mid-Brisbane River. While the Bremer River is the worst performing catchment in SEQ according to the report card, grades have improved slightly from an F to a D+ over the 20-year program duration. The key drivers of the poor health in the Bremer River are high Nitrogen, Phosphorous and Turbidity and the resulting low dissolved oxygen levels.

The EHMP has supported a coordinated, regional scale catchment management approach through the Council of Mayor Resilient River's Initiative (RRI). Under the Resilient Rivers Initiative banner, Ipswich Council has been involved in the development and implementation of the Mid Brisbane River and the Lower Brisbane River Catchment Action Plans and was the lead organisation in the development of the Bremer River Catchment Action Plan (CAP). The CAP's set a range of management actions to achieve the goals of the RRI by all relevant stakeholders.

As a partnership program the EHMP on its own merit could be considered value for money. For example, it would cost ICC significantly more that we currently pay to undertake the same amount of monitoring. However, the question arises for ICC, are (a) how much value do we actually gain from the monitoring program in relation to supporting ICC plans and strategies; in other words, what value do we gain from supporting a regional scale monitoring program; (b) with limited ICC resources direct to environmental monitoring, would the funds currently being provided to HLW be of more value directed towards establishing a monitoring program that is more closely aligned with assessing the effectiveness of our plans and strategies.

It should also be noted that ICC is not the only program partner assessing the value of EHMP and ongoing support. In recent years both Seqwater and Gold Coast City Council has withdrawn from the program and we are in communication with BCC who are reviewing their position.

In recent months HLW has reached out to ICC to establish another 3-year agreement to support the EHMP. Given waning partnership support of the program, and our own long-standing reservation of the EHMP's value to ICC, we are questioning whether ICC should be locking into another 3-year

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agreement at this stage. The purpose of this position paper is to provide a high-level assessment of EHMP's value to the ICC, with the intent of providing support to: (a) only commit to a one year agreement with HLW; (b) using the current financial year to undertake a more detailed value assessment; (c) work with HLW to determine if there are options within the EHMP to improve the value of EHMP to ICC; (d) more clearly define ICC local waterway monitoring program needs in support of local actions, plans and strategies.

### EHMP Goal

In assessing the value of EHMP it is important to understand the goal of the program and approach taken to meet the goal. As stated on the EHMP website and Annual Report, these are:

**EHMP Regional goal for waterways:** *Enhance community quality of life by fostering stewardship to protect and restore waterway health*

**The EHMP is designed to achieve these goals by:**

- *Inspire action.*
- *Identify priority areas for investment and support members to identify and implement actions.*
- *Provide an assessment of the effectiveness of management actions and progress towards targets.*
- *Provide data relevant for researchers, managers and the wider community that contributes to greater waterway understanding.*

### EHMP Review

The EHMP has been reviewed approximately every five years since 2010 with the aim of ensuring the program continuously improves and adapts. Most recently, a review was completed at the end of 2021 with aim of ensuring alignment of the EHMP with member needs, while retaining program integrity and expanding the scope to align with future monitoring and reporting frameworks. Through a series of stakeholder workshops the review assessed and made recommendations in four dimensions of the program, these being; Data and Information; Evaluation, Engagement and communication; and Action and Achievements.

Of significance to this position paper was the statement that:

*"...the role of EHMP in South East Queensland has changed over the past 20 years. Local councils are much better equipped to develop "in-house" policy and programs and subsequently may have less of a reliance on EHMP for this input. However, it was noted that EHMP still has a critical role in connecting and convening those in South East Queensland developing policy and programs with each other for information sharing"*

This statement touches on the core issues at hand, that being local council needing to establish "in-house" monitoring programs to support their specific plans and strategies, while at the same time being requested to support a regional scale monitoring program (EHMP), all within a tight fiscal environment.

The program review did however include several recommendations that may lay a path forward (at least from an operational context) for increased alignment of the regional scale EHMP to local council in-house monitoring requirements. These recommendations include;

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- Use third-party data, even when not consistently available across all regions (assuming data is of high quality).
- Use third-party data for reporting at a finer geographic scale.
- Develop geographically finer-scale recommendations to assist implementation of actions by groups working on-the ground.
- Increase linkages between report card results and on the ground actions, population growth and climate change.

In relation to ICC potential future direction, these recommendations acknowledge that finer scale monitoring is needed and that any future monitoring undertaken by ICC could be integrated into the report card. The result being that future report cards could be based on both the regional scale EHMP supporting REMP requirements and local council scale monitoring that supports council catchment management plans and strategies.

### ICC waterway monitoring needs

A waterway monitoring program is an essential element of any catchment management program, providing the scientific evidence needed to assess effectiveness of restoration and protection actions as well as identifying any emerging issues. To provide timely and informative information into adaptive management process a monitoring program's design must consider aspects such as; (i) the spatial and temporal scales at which trends may be detected; (ii) what environmental indicators are most appropriate to monitor; (iii) how the monitoring data will be analysed and interpreted to inform catchment management; and (iv) available resources to support the monitoring.

ICC currently has limited capacity to monitor waterway health, with the resources available typically being used for ad hoc reasons such as monitoring after a flood event or to assess effectiveness of an individual restoration project such as the removal of a fish barrier. Given the monitoring programs current level of funding it is not realistic to expect a program beyond what is currently being delivered, however it is recognised that a more comprehensive monitoring program is needed if we are to effectively inform and track progress of implementing our Integrated Catchment Strategy. While the cost of such a monitoring program is yet to be determined, experience in other jurisdictions shows that the cost is minor in relation to the overall investment in catchment management, yet provides significant value in ensuring the available funds are being appropriately allocated and demonstrating to stakeholders what progress is being made.

### Cost of Supporting the EHMP

Year	Core Membership	Clean up Program	Total	\$ Change	% Change
2016/2017	\$76,000.00	\$16,000.00	\$92,000.00		
2017/2018	\$75,000.00	\$16,000.00	\$91,000.00	-\$1,000.00	-1.10%
2018/2019	\$73,000.00	\$16,000.00	\$89,000.00	-\$2,000.00	-2.25%
2019/2020	\$77,200.00	\$20,000.00	\$97,200.00	\$8,200.00	8.44%
2020/2021	\$78,700.00	\$20,000.00	\$98,700.00	\$1,500.00	1.52%
2021/2022	\$80,420.00	\$20,000.00	\$100,420.00	\$1,720.00	1.71%
2022/2023	\$83,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$103,000.00	\$2,580.00	2.50%
2023/2024	\$87,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$107,000.00	\$4,000.00	3.74%
2024/2025	\$91,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$111,000.00	\$4,000.00	3.60%
Total	\$721,320.00	\$168,000.00	\$889,320.00	\$19,000.00	120.65%



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EHMP's value to ICC is assessed in relation to both the programs aims and the deliverables identified in the proposed 2022-23 member agreement. As highlighted in Table 1, EHMP's stated aims align strongly with ICC needs, however, the overall value received by ICC is considered to be of low to moderate value. This speaks to the broader narrative of this position paper, that this regional monitoring program is not supporting local decision-making.

Table 2 highlights value of EHMP deliverables in the proposed 2022-23 member agreement. The table highlights that for the most part the deliverables are of moderate to low value to ICC. As an aside, it should be noted that it is not clear how the program deliverables support the program aims.

**Table 1: EHMP's Aims – values received by ICC**

Aim	ICC Need	ICC Value received	Comment
Inspire action	High	Moderate	While the EHMP Report Card has inspired action such as the Resilient Rivers Initiative, its potential value to ICC is assessed as moderate considering only a single report card grade for an entire river is provided and that the Report Card grades varies little from year to year i.e. hard to inspire action if no improvement shown at this broad scale.
Identify priority areas for investment and support members to identify and implement actions	High	Low	Current program helps identify regional priorities (i.e. Bremer River as a priority against other SEQ waterways) but has not supported ICC identify priority areas within the Bremer, nor support optimised delivery of ICC plans and strategies.
Provide an assessment of the effectiveness of management actions and progress towards targets	High	Low	Design of EHMP (e.g. location of monitoring stations) is not linked to specific ICC catchment plans or strategies. Monitoring undertaken at locations where timely response to management actions would not be expected due to cumulative impacts in relation to management intervention.
Provide data relevant for researchers, managers and the wider community that contributes to greater understanding of waterways.	Moderate	Moderate	While somewhat difficult to accurately define what value is received, the importance of EHMP monitoring data to researchers and broader community is recognised.

**Table 2: Value of Deliverables to ICC**

Deliverable	Description	ICC value received	Comment
Science Committee and Scientific Expert Panels	Access to Science Committee and Scientific Expert Panels. Membership of Monitoring and Evaluation Steering Committee.	Moderate	Membership of MESC provides opportunity to network.  Most recently the science panel have guided on the methods for the EHMP

## Item 16.4 / Attachment 2.

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Environmental Condition characterisation	Monitoring Bremer River estuary water quality (x # sites in ICC), monitoring freshwater biological health (I). Access to annual trends	Moderate - Low	Location of sites is not optimised for local ICC needs. E.g. ICC does not require as many sites in the estuarine reach of Bremer River. Relocating these sites to ICC Creeks such as Bundamba Creek would be of greater value.
Community benefit assessment	Access to social data collected from residents in the includes the frequency and type of waterway-based recreation, the barriers that prevent waterways recreation, respondent's perception of the condition of their waterways.	Moderate	Provides some understanding on how the community in the area value their waterways.
Modelling	Maintain integrated catchment and receiving water quality models enabling catchment management scenario modelling	Low - Moderate	Have only ever used outputs as a guide. Very Course and regional scale and require Council to do further
Decision support tools	Update and maintenance of EHMP Report Card Website.	Moderate - Low	While the value of the EHMP report card website is acknowledge as an important tool for reporting grades, it is not actively used by ICC staff in delivery of our plans and strategies.
Engagement and communication	Annual release of report card including ICC brief, media release	Moderate	Annual release helps ensure continued focus on restoring and protecting regional waterways, although similar grade from year to year has resulted in waning political and community interest.
Research and development	Various initiatives including future card, pilot REMP and methods improvement	Unknown	Outcomes of EHMP R&D have not been clearly communicated to ICC. Some good guidelines and outputs from Water by Design. Not directly EHMP related

### Conclusion and recommendations

The EHMP has been in existence for over 20 years with ICC supporting the program since its inception. The longevity of the program highlighting the need for a regional scale monitoring program to support regional scale planning. In a bid to remain relevant to its partners the program has undertaken periodic reviews and evolved in response to these reviews. Notwithstanding EHMP's continued evolution and value at a regional scale, the overarching questions that ICC needs to consider are: Firstly, does the program meet our environmental monitoring needs, and if not, would available funds be more appropriately redirected towards developing a robust in-house monitoring program. Secondly, are the broader benefits of participating in this high-profile program (e.g. exposure received during released of the report card grades) greater than the benefits of developing an in-house monitoring program. Thirdly, is there an opportunity to continue supporting both the EHMP and a robust in-house monitoring program (with the potential that one supports the other).

This high-level assessment identifies that for the most part EHMP's value to ICC is low to moderate, however a more thorough evaluation is needed, especially in relation to development of an alternate local monitoring program. In response to this high-level assessment of EHMP's value to ICC the following steps are recommended:

Wednesday 5 October 2022  
Environment and Sustainability

1. Proceed with a one-year agreement with Healthy Land and Water (HLW) for support of the EHMP program in 2022/23. HLW be advised why ICC is not progressing with the requested three-year agreement and that future support is pending a more detailed review to be completed over the next 12 months (see recommendation #3).
2. Scope a waterway monitoring program in support of our integrated catchment strategy. This scoping exercise to identify if and how EHMP monitoring can support ICC specific monitoring needs and how this program could support EHMP's potential evolving direction.
3. Undertake a more detailed assessment of EHMP value. This assessment to incorporate the monitoring needs identified in recommendation #2, discussions with HLW to determine their intent to align EHMP to local council needs and understanding of the broader value of supporting EHMP to ICC. This work to be undertaken in time to support 2024/25 budget development.