



Burdekin Shire Council mayor Lyn McLaughlin met with opposition leader Bill Shorten, Labor candidate for Dawson Belinda Hassan and Pacific Bio managing director Sam Bastounas and facility team members on Thursday, January 24, after Bill Shorten announced an investment of \$5 million into the Burdekin water treatment facility in a bid to help protect the Great Barrier Reef.

#### REGIONAL NEWS

## Burdekin set to receive \$5 million investment under Labor Government

SHANNEN MCDONALD, Townsville Bulletin

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The Burdekin region could become a hub for an innovative project to see clean water entered back into the Great Barrier Reef after \$5 million was committed to the development under a Labor government.

Opposition leader Bill Shorten visited the Burdekin on the 'Bill Bus' on Thursday, to see first hand the reef saving water treatment facility at Pacific Bio, formally known as MBD.

The project, located at the Ayr/Brandon Waste Water Treatment Plant, would upgrade the plant from its current lower secondary treatment level to a tertiary treatment process.

If federal funding is secured, the Burdekin facility will roll out a trial which Burdekin Shire Council mayor Lyn McLaughlin said has the potential to be adopted by other wastewater facilities along the Queensland coast.

"If it works and can be proven to work like it has here — what happens is it saves huge capital investment," she said.

"Treatment is a big issue for councils, you're dealing with the quality of water."

Researchers from James Cook University along with the team at Pacific Bio devised the process of water treatment which uses a form of macro algae to eliminate or significantly reduce harmful nutrients from wastewater before it enters the ocean.

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“It will enable us to fund regional jobs, initiatives that save our Barrier Reef and also potentially give us a growth industry, indeed an export industry” he said.

“One of the challenges for the reef besides climate change is water quality, and if we can improve the water quality we can then protect the reef and create jobs in the process.”

The Burdekin is set to further benefit from the project due to a by-product of the water cleansing process which can be used as liquid fertiliser for cane farming.

Cr McLaughlin said there was major benefit for councils to be able to install a facility which delivers return on their investment, not usually seen with tertiary waste water management.

“If we have to put in a tertiary sewerage plant, we’re looking at a minimum of \$30 to \$34 million that then the community has to repay,” she said.

“There’s not really a good repayment at the end of a tertiary treatment plant whereas this one you’ve got another product that can be on sold, generating a return.”

