

Council seeks sewage solution on Gold Coast

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by Mike Dinsdale

An innovative sewerage system used on the Gold Coast could be the answer to Whangarei's wastewater woes.

Mayor Morris Cutforth and a council delegation are in Australia to assess the system.

Mr Cutforth, Whangarei District Council Infrastructure Committee chairman Greg Martin, chief executive Mark Simpson and Infrastructure and Services group manager Simon Weston flew to the Gold Coast yesterday.

The Waterfuture system is

used by the Gold Coast Council in the Pimpama Coomera region and is a strategy to provide a secure water supply to the region whilst delivering social, environmental and economic benefits to the community using a mixture of treatment methods.

A big part of the system is recycling water and it is designed to accommodate a fast-growing population.

The WDC group hopes it can be used to solve Whangarei's wastewater problems. Since January 2002 there have been at least 50 sewage spills in the Whangarei

Harbour and contributing streams from the city's wastewater treatment system.

The district council plans on spending \$50 million on the system over the next nine years, but the Gold Coast system may provide a cheaper alternative. The Pimpama Coomera population is set to grow from 5000 to 150,000 in 50 years.

Mr Cutforth said the Gold Coast shared several geographic features with Whangarei, being a coastal settlement with an emphasis on water sports and recreation.

"If the system can cope with the tropical rains and population

pressures there, then I'm hopeful it will do so here," he said.

"Cleaning up the harbour remains one of my top priorities and I'm willing to look at almost any affordable option that will contribute to that."

While Mr Simpson and Mr Weston both have engineering backgrounds to assess the suitability of the system, Mr Cutforth said he and Mr Martin would need to be convinced about its viability so they could explain it to the harbour guardian groups and the other councillors who would ultimately make the decision.