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FYFE WINS GAS FIELD WATER

TREATMENT CONTRACT

Two treatment plants capable of processing a total of nearly five megalitres of saline wastewater a day are being developed in Queensland to deal with one of the major by-products of Australia's emerging coal seam gas (CSG) industry – water.

The treatment plants are being designed and engineered by national engineering and surveying firm Fyfe, under contract from Queensland company, The Pump House, for the rapidly developing Fairview and Roma CSG fields near Roma in Queensland.

Under the terms of the contract, Fyfe has until the end of June to develop the plants to factory acceptance and testing stage.

Fyfe's Oil and Gas Engineering Manager, Mr Bruce Dickson, said the process of extracting coal seam gas involves removing water from underground coal reserves to free up methane. The gas and water is brought to the surface by wells.

"One well can extract up to 500,000 litres of water a day," he said.

"In the combined fields for CSG production in Queensland, there could be between 4000 and 8000 wells when the industry is at maturity, so there is a lot of water to be extracted and managed."

Mr Dickson said The Pump House had access to a new process which enabled these salt levels to be reduced to around 3500 parts per million (ppm), at which stage the water could be used to irrigate salt tolerant plants or be used for stock watering.

He said the process involved the management of sodium, iron and other minerals in the water and was much cheaper than other treatment methods such as reverse osmosis or evaporative distillation.

"Most of the water is salty and varies in quality from a few thousand ppm of salt to 36,000 ppm, which is just below the salinity level of the sea," he said.

"This variation will determine whether the new process alone, or in combination with more expensive methods is required.

“The idea is that significant plantations of salt tolerant crops will be developed near the treatment plants and irrigated with the treated water, rather than the water being dumped into tailings dams,” he said.

“This meets the requirements of environmental protection authorities and gives some practical use to the waste water being extracted with the CSG.”

Mr Dickson said the plants were being developed at The Pump House facilities at Nambour on the Queensland coast.

“They have the process and we are providing them with the engineering design support to make it all happen,” he said.

“It’s a natural extension to the engineering and survey work we currently undertake in the CSG industry in Queensland as well as the natural gas industry in South Australia.”

Mr Dickson said the first plants were being developed for use in the Roma and Fairview fields, with the likelihood that further plants may be developed as the CSG industry expands.

In recent years, Fyfe has worked on the development of more than 1500 wells and 1200 gathering lines for the CSG industry in Queensland.

Last year it also undertook survey work for the development of the Roma to Gladstone pipeline which will carry CSG from production wells in the Surat and Bowen basins near Roma, Fairview and Scotia to a new LNG processing and export facility at Gladstone.

Fyfe currently has around 45 staff working at its Brisbane office, with another seven at a satellite office at Roma.

Further Information:

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