

Clean-up bill hits \$13m

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SUNSHINE Coast Council faces contractor penalties of \$146,000 a day and a potential \$25 million total bill as it grapples with how to manage PFAS-contaminated water on the airport construction site.

A closed-door special meeting on August 22 last year was told the cost of dealing with the issue could ultimately include contractor penalties of close to \$10 million made up of

\$3.4 million in inefficiencies and \$6.5 million in delay penalties. Deputy Mayor Tim Dwyer, in his capacity as Sunshine Coast Airport Expansion Project chairman, revealed yesterday afternoon that \$12.75 million has been spent to date in dealing with the issue.

The August meeting came after correspondence to the council from the Department of Environment and Science on July 23 that made clear broader issues of potential

PFAS contamination in the Maroochy River catchment had been compounded by the historic use of PFAS firefighting foam at the airport.

The department pointed out the need for PFAS management was not identified through the course of the Environmental Impact Statement for the runway construction project and comprehensive baseline testing was not undertaken to support starting the project.

The previously confidential

minutes of the August 22 special meeting have been released through a right to information request by Division 8 candidate Kathryn Hyman.

She said the request came after sitting councillor Jason O'Pray had promised a public meeting organised by community groups on September 10 at the Maroochy RSL that they would be given access to reports that informed the decision to pump the PFAS contaminated water out to sea.

More than 15,000 people signed a petition opposed to that solution.

Ms Hyman has questioned why the matter was discussed in secret in the first place given the decision now to release the entire contents of the confidential meeting minutes.

The council last year ultimately released online, information about the release but not the documents that have now become available through her request.

The ocean outfall proposal

for the PFAS-contaminated water was suggested by the Department of Environment and Science as a better option than putting pollutants into the Maroochy River.

The report considered by councillors on August 22 explained ocean outfall would cost \$3.1 million over three months as opposed to \$7.5 million just to treat 150 megalitres through the water treatment plant. Potential delay costs of \$17.5 million over six months were also identified.