



COUNCILLOR
Vern Veitch and
Ken Bellamy
from VRM at Lou
Lister Park
where VRM's
new liquid
fertiliser has
allowed the
grass to grow for
the first time

*Photo: STEWART MCLEAN
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Fertiliser a dollar saver

A TRIAL of an innovative new liquid fertiliser could save the Townsville City Council up to \$3 million annually on its parks and gardens maintenance bill.

The liquid bio fertiliser comes from a Townsville company, Vital Resource Management (VRM), which is gaining attention on an international scale for its products.

Council's Environment and Sustainability Committee chair, Vern Veitch, said that the effects and benefits of the fertiliser were truly remarkable.

"The bio fertiliser reduces the water required for the parks by 50 per cent, which is a huge reduction," he said.

"This process is particularly important in the dry tropics with the increasing costs of water.

"Water treatment is very expensive, so conserving it like this will be in the community's best interest."

Cr Veitch said conventional fertilisers are also more expensive and don't have the added benefit of capturing carbon.

So far around 150 hectares have been treated with the liquid fertiliser, which equates to around 10 per cent of all parks in Townsville.

The council aims to have it used in all of Townsville's parks in the next five years.

In the longer term it could mean savings of as much as \$3 million annually according to Cr Veitch.

"Once it's established in the parks we will have to fertilise far less often, as little as once a year potentially," Cr Veitch said.

The bio fertiliser, which is created with recycled organic matter including food, delivers nutrients in a liquid form, which allows faster uptake of nutrients and helps to build microbial populations which continue to feed plants long after fertilising.

Founder and managing director of the company creating the fertiliser, Ken Bellamy, said that the fertiliser was environmentally beneficial from a number of angles.

"These good bacteria in the soil photosynthesise, and take carbon out of the atmosphere," he said.

"By this process carbon dioxide biomass is captured in the soil thus making it a carbon sink.

"The nutrient increase in the soil also means that the watering necessary in the parks is cut by as much as a half."

Tests using the fertiliser have been conducted in four parks around Townsville.

Cr Veitch said one patch of soil in Lou Lister Park which never grew anything before, has now been replaced by lush green grass.

— CALLAN HARKER