

Waste water treatment tariffs a challenge

Hotels and restaurants in Bali are being urged to join the centralized wastewater treatment system operated by government-run Denpasar Sewerage Development Project (DSDP). Nonetheless, the requirement for customers to pay for the service is a great challenge.

“We are urging the mayor and regents to encourage more hotels and restaurants in their areas to take part in this wastewater management system,” head of DSDP wastewater management, Nyoman Sueta, told The Jakarta Post on Monday.

“[Today] roughly only 10 percent of hotels in Bali have been connected to the DSDP system, while others may have their own wastewater management installations or dump their wastewater into open waters,” said Sueta.

Bali has 1,319 hotels, from budget level to star-rated. The latest DSDP records show only 130 accommodation businesses, consisting of star-rated hotels, non-starred hotels and inns, in Denpasar, Sanur and Kuta that are connected to the wastewater network, while as of May, only four more have requested new connections.

Since the centralized wastewater treatment plant started operations in 2008, DSDP has installed 8,647 user connections, while this year it targets a further 7,500 new connections. Most of the users are households rather than businesses.

Sueta acknowledged that the monthly tariff served as a major hurdle in motivating hotels to become users. Reportedly, among the 130 hotels connected to the sewerage network, only 27 are willing to pay the monthly fee.

The fee to use the centralized sewerage system has been regulated since 2011 by Regional Bylaw No. 2/2011. Monthly tariffs for households are up to Rp 25,000 (US\$2.56) while star-rated hotels could be charged up to Rp 100,000 per room, and restaurants up to Rp 700,000 depending on their seating capacity.

Bali-chapter Association of Indonesian Hotels and Restaurants (PHRI Bali) Deputy Chairman I Gusti Ngurah Rai Suryawijaya expected a reasonable tariff to be set for the sewer service.

“The current tariff, which is based on the number of rooms instead of occupancy rate, is not reasonable.”

“Since the regulation was drafted, we were never involved. How could that possibly happen, when we are the ones that will have to pay the fee? The government must realize that there are always three stakeholders in tourism: government, businesses and the community. There should be equal partnership among these three parties.”

Rai also emphasized: “For hotel managements like us, the beach and the culture are the two most important assets of our businesses. We would never want to see our ocean polluted by waste.”

Last year, the Bali Environmental Agency (BLH) announced that most of the samples of processed wastewater from a number of hotels, hospitals and other businesses had not met threshold standards for disposal into open waters.

The water samples were taken from 50 locations, which included 14 private and government hospitals and 23 hotels, all of which were located near open water. Most of the hotels' wastewater samples were taken in Denpasar city, Badung, Gianyar, Karangasem and Buleleng regencies.