



Communities preparing for the pipeline



Office manager Wendy Whitehead with business manager Rick Rickard at work at Aitken's Scotsleigh Gypsum in Horsham. The company is supplying bedding sand for the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline. Photo courtesy of Wimmera Mail-Times.

Business

Latest figures show that stage one construction of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline will inject around \$72 million into the local economy this year.

Many Wimmera businesses feeling the bite of a depressed economy caused by drought are now feeling a direct positive impact of pipeline construction.

For example, Aitken's Scotsleigh Gypsum and Aitken's Transport are 'flat out' thanks to the pipeline. Owned by Roger Aitken for 20 years, the two businesses are supplying bedding sand to construction contractor Mitchell Water.

Contractors who have come to the region as part of pipeline construction are bringing spending power. Towns along the pipeline path are seeing an influx of employees who require food, accommodation, entertainment and relaxation from within local communities.

Regional discussions

Housing and accommodation, local business capacity, on-farm diversification and social issues arising from construction of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline are high on the agenda of local councils, economic development associations, industry, government and business groups.

A regional development coordinating group facilitates regular discussions on preparing communities for the pipeline.

Preparing landholders

Preparing landholders for a piped water supply is also a priority. GWMWater, through its On-Farm Water Reticulation Guide, is working to ensure landholders have access to the latest information and technology in preparing for the pipeline. Other organisations such as catchment management authorities and the Department of Primary Industries are also running projects that help landholders prepare for a piped water supply.

Landholder working group

A Wimmera Mallee Pipeline landowner working group for the initial construction areas is up and running. Wimmera landowners Roy Rogers, Jim Sleep, Laurence Hedt, Graeme Maher, John Saxton, Marshall Rodda, Wayne Beddison and Rob Robinson are representing community views and issues regarding the construction phase.

Tapping points, on-farm works, channel decommissioning, sourcing materials such as pipes and tanks, contractor availability for on-farm works and easements on properties are among topics discussed.

The group meets every three months to provide landholder feedback on pipeline construction to GMMWater. Similar landowner groups will be established in other areas as construction progresses across the region.

Community opportunities

Pipeline contractors are encouraged to put back as much into the local community as possible. It is vital for GMMWater, Local Government, State Government agencies, industry, economic development organisations and the community to communicate; this will ensure that the region is adequately prepared for a piped water supply.

Contractors database

To maximise work opportunities for contractors, GMMWater has compiled a database of local contractors for successful project tenderers. If you would like to add your name to the contractor database please contact GMMWater (details below) or visit the GMMWater website:

www.gmmwater.org.au

Go to the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline Project link to visit the contract/tenders page. You can add your contact and information details on-line.

Further information regarding communities preparing for the pipeline is available by contacting the **Horsham Piping It Office** on **1300 659 961** or by dropping into the office at **42-44 Kalkee Road**.

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