



sugarloaf pipeline project **community** update

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Bushfires

The recent bushfires have had a devastating impact on communities within the Murrindindi and Yarra Ranges Shires. Those who were not directly affected have still been touched by the personal toll and loss of property and stock as a result of the fires. The Alliance expresses its deep sympathy to all those throughout the region who are affected or have experienced loss.

Bushfire Assistance

During and since the fires, many people and organisations came forward to assist those in need. The Alliance was pleased to do its bit to assist the communities we have been working in, especially around Toolangi and Glenburn.

At the height of the emergency, we made machinery and equipment available to the CFA, including bulldozers, graders and water carts. In addition, up to 120 Alliance employees volunteered their time around the clock to assist with fire fighting. We have also provided generators, fuel, trucks and water to some of those affected by the disaster.

With nearly half of our workers living in the region, the Alliance is continuing to look for ways to help local communities with immediate, practical assistance and longer term rebuilding. The Alliance has recently donated two kilometres of silt fencing to the Goulburn Broken CMA, for distribution by local Landcare groups to fire affected landowners. Silt fencing is used to protect farm dams and waterways from water run off contaminated by ash and debris.



Construction Roundup

The bushfires meant that work on the pipeline had to be suspended. When permission was given for crews to return to the forest and other work areas their first task was to ensure the area was safe from hazards like burnt trees, damaged power lines and unstable land areas.

We continued to work closely with the CFA in verifying that our existing fire management procedures were adequate.

Significant progress has also been made in laying pipes with more than 40 kilometres already in the ground.

This work is preceded by the fencing of work areas, clearing of top soil and trenching. Once the pipes have been laid, welded and tested, reinstatement can begin.

Reinstatement involves several steps: backfilling of the trench, preparation of subsoil, spreading of topsoil and seed, and measures to prevent erosion.

Reinstatement has commenced throughout the Glenburn area, and will continue to roll out through to the conclusion of construction.

Other major works to date include:

- Clearing and excavation and commencement of construction of the low-lift pump station at the

Goulburn River, near Killingworth;

- Sheet piling in the Goulburn River in preparation for construction of the inlet structure;
- Preparing the area at either end of the tunnel section in preparation for tunnel boring and commencement of tunnelling – so far 500 metres of the tunnel has been completed;
- Construction of the outlet structure at Sugarloaf Reservoir;
- The zone sub-station – which will provide power to the two pump stations; and
- The high-lift pump station – which will provide storage and pumping capacity to push water up and over the Great Dividing Range.



The New Project Website

The project website was relaunched at the end of last year with a range of new content. The site includes many new features and has been designed to be more user friendly.

Visitors to the new site will be able to view the latest news, detailed traffic information, see how the community are involved, download works bulletins and fact sheets and learn about other aspects of the project. There is also provision to register your contact details so that you can receive more regular project updates and information.

The new project website can be found at www.sugarloafpipeline.com.au.

Current Traffic Changes

As well as additional vehicle movements along the pipeline route, a number of traffic changes are necessary. These changes are intended to make conditions safer for all motorists. They include:

- Reduced speed limits near work areas and site access points;
- Construction of turning lanes near site entrances;
- Placement of concrete safety barriers;
- Temporary lane closures; and
- Traffic control personnel or signals.

Many traffic changes are only required while specific works are taking place; however, other changes are required for the duration of construction works.

Speed reductions will be in place in the following locations for the remainder of the project's construction:

- Killingworth Road between Goulburn Valley Highway and the entrance to the river pump station site;
- Goulburn Valley Highway between Yea and Carey Road (extension of town limit);

- Melba Highway south of Glenburn, near the entrance to the site office;
- Melba Highway in the Toolangi Forest, approximately six kilometres south of Glenburn; and
- Eltham-Yarra Glen Road at Ridge Road, Christmas Hills.

Current traffic updates are available from the project website.

Pipe and Pipeline Facts

Each section of pipe is:

- 13.3 metres long
- Weighs—10 tonnes
- Made of mild steel—internally lined with concrete, externally coated with MDPE (Sintakote)

The pipeline will consist of:

- 10,800 welds
- 350,000 cubic metres of earthworks
- 400,000 tonnes of Bedding Material
- 800 metre long tunnel using a Tunnel Boring Machine
- 17 River/Creek Crossings
- 13 Road Crossings
- 1 Bridge Crossing
- Approximately 40 kilometres of Fibre Optic Cable

Compensation Payments Begin to Flow

The first compensation payments have been made to landowners whose properties are impacted by the pipeline.

The payments follow several months of close discussion with the landowners concerned. This process has allowed the Alliance partners to fully understand the issues affecting particular properties.

The Victorian Valuer-General is responsible for assessing what is a fair and reasonable offer of compensation for the acquisition of an easement.

Landowners are eligible for two types of compensation:

1. The first is where an easement is compulsorily acquired (this amounts to buying an interest in the land which the pipeline runs through and serves to protect the pipe). This process is administered by the *Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986* with the Victorian Valuer-General's Office responsible for assessing what is fair and reasonable compensation.
2. The second is where land is entered or occupied as part of construction of the Sugarloaf Pipeline, resulting in direct financial losses and expenses due to disruption (e.g. if a landowner is unable to use part of a paddock for grazing or crops due to construction). This compensation comes under the *Water Act 1989*.

Further information is available in the Compensation Fact Sheet (January 2009), which is available on the project website.

Progress with Regional Benefits Program

The Regional Benefits Program is now open and accepting applications for funding with the closing date extended until 30 June 2009.

The original closing date for applications was extended following the bushfires, in recognition of the fact that many people and groups had lost time to prepare their submission and, in some cases, had lost important documents in the fires.

A total of \$5 million is available and is intended to provide a positive legacy to assist communities affected by construction of the pipeline.

Under the program, local councils and incorporated community groups can apply for funding grants of up to \$500,000. Unincorporated groups can also apply by having their application sponsored by council or an incorporated community organisation.

Workshops were held to explain how to write a funding submission and answer a number of related questions. Submissions will be reviewed by the Regional Benefits Advisory Committee, which consists of a number of local community members, as well as representatives of local councils and other agencies.

Application forms, guidelines and other information to assist in preparing a submission are available from the project website or by calling the Regional Benefits Program Manager, Claire Garth on 0403 028 662.

Irrigation Renewal

Work on the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District's irrigation upgrades is gearing up for the 2009 Winter Works with tenders being announced in late May for contractors to install regulator gates, meters, walkways and handrails.

Stage 1 of the \$2 billion Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project (NVIRP) is jointly funded by the Victorian Government (\$600 million), Melbourne Water (\$300 million) and Goulburn Murray Water (\$100 million). Combined with the Commonwealth Government's \$1 billion contribution for Stage 2, the project will be the largest irrigation renewal project ever in Australia's history, delivering long term average water savings of 425 billion litres per annum.

These water savings will transform the irrigation industry and secure the region's agricultural and commercial future.

Of these savings, 80 percent will remain in northern Victoria to be shared by irrigators and the environment, while 20 percent will be available for Melbourne, to be delivered via the Sugarloaf Pipeline.

Discussions have also been taking place recently with landowners throughout the district about how to get the best returns on irrigation allocations, to ensure their long term viability.

Alliance Supports Local Charity

The Sugarloaf Pipeline Alliance has donated \$10,000 to the Yea Wildlife Haven to help with the construction of a new wombat enclosure.

Alliance staff have also helped with the renovation of the old wombat pens. Contributing to the Yea Wildlife Haven is in keeping with the Alliance's commitment to protect and care for native animals. Alliance staff are trained in understanding the best procedures to provide emergency treatment for injured wildlife. The Alliance also

has a comprehensive environmental management plan that ensures native animals encountered along the pipeline corridor are cared for and released back into the local environment safely.

The Alliance has often called on The Haven for assistance in caring for injured wildlife and rehabilitating them until they can be released back into the wild.

The \$10,000 donation to the Wildlife Haven is the first payment. A further donation contributing to a new on-site animal hospital will be made toward the end of the project.



Protecting the Environment

The approval process for the pipeline requires very strict environmental controls to be put in place. These are designed to ensure the project causes the minimum disturbance to the environment and that endangered species are protected.

While most of the pipeline is being buried under paddocks and along roadsides, one section will pass through the Toolangi State Forest. Some sections of the forest are particularly sensitive and great care has been taken in designing this section to minimise the amount and quality of vegetation that needs to be removed.

The construction corridor will be kept as narrow as possible through this 11 kilometre section. Wherever possible it will be directed towards areas with reduced vegetation, for example fire tracks and quarries. It will also include an 830 metre tunnel, being built under a particularly steep section, which is also the highest ecologically valued area along the pipeline alignment.

The majority of the construction corridor in the Toolangi State Forest will be revegetated once the pipeline trench has been filled in, including planting tree ferns salvaged during clearing works, however, a track for maintenance vehicles will be required. In addition to revegetation, the Alliance is also establishing an 826 hectare conservation zone in the Victorian Alps. This previously private property was purchased to 'offset' the environmental disturbance. This amounts to protecting an area of high-value bushland almost **15 times larger** than the area cleared in the Toolangi State Forest and **six times larger** than was required under Victoria's Native Vegetation Management Framework.

The offset area has been purchased with the intention of being added to the neighbouring Alpine National Park.