

REPORT OF PIPELINE MEETING, 12/11/07

STEELS CREEK COMMUNITY CENTRE, 7.30 – 9.30 pm

This report is a brief summary of a meeting, that was called at very short notice, of 27 residents of the Dixons Creek, Steels Creek and Yarra Glen community on November 12. It was agreed that Malcolm Calder act as Chairman.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for people to hear the views of other members of the community and to understand the nature of the project and its process. The whole proposal is a major regional programme involving the modernisation of the irrigation system of the Goulburn Irrigation Region to produce an estimated saving of 225 Gl water. Construction of the Sugarloaf Interconnector component of this project will involve the construction of a massive underground pipeline (1.7 > 1.3m dia) from the Goulburn River, north of Yea to the Sugarloaf Reservoir, following an alignment within a broad band of the Melba Highway.

In our area, essentially the 3775 postal district, the proposal is to bring the pipe down from the main ridge through State Forest to the east of the Melba Highway down to the private land north of Dixons Creek.

From Dixons Creek there are two options being considered. The first of these is to turn west along Hunts Lane as far as Steels Creek and then down the Steels Creek Valley to Glenview Road. From Glenview Road several paths up to Sugarloaf are being considered.

The second option is to continue down the Melba Highway valley as far as Yarra Glen and then along Symonds Street to Glenview Road. A variation of this second proposal, is to come down the Melba alignment as far as the Aqueduct some 4.5 km north of Yarra Glen and then along the Aqueduct easement all the way to Sugarloaf.

Any of these proposals are going to have major impacts, both short and long-term, on our community. Private property could be impacted, transport and access restricted, environmental quality destroyed, and much, much more. There is an obvious potential for this pipeline to tear our close-knit communities apart.

The main objective of the meeting was to see if we could develop an agreed community response to the pipeline in our region. Initially, there was a majority view that we should simply oppose the whole project. But it was pointed out that this would mean that we were opposed to the irrigation upgrade of the Goulburn irrigation system.

A second view, with strong support, recognised that there was really no strong evidence to show that the irrigation upgrade could actually produce 225 Gl, especially given the current climate trends. Therefore, it was agreed that there should be no construction of any part of the pipeline at least until there was clear evidence and demonstration that the savings could be made.

With regard to the actual path of the pipeline through our region, we agreed on several principles to achieve the least damaging route:-

- Construction should only be on public land.
- There should be minimal environmental destruction.
- Rural families and people should benefit.
- Farming and rural enterprises must not suffer.
- Existing infrastructure must be used (roads, aqueduct etc).
- Tunnel to avoid private property or environmental destruction.

Applying these principles, would lead to an alignment which, from the State Forest, would go along the Melba Highway public land as far as the Maroondah Aqueduct and then follow the Aqueduct to Sugarloaf. Anything else would be unacceptable because one or more of the above principles would be broken. It was the strong view of the meeting that this is the only route it could support

From this meeting a committee was formed comprising Councillor Jeanette McRae, Steve Carroll; Ivan Filsell; Robyn Henchel; Fred Lyons; Graeme Miller; Brian Mullens; Lyn Mullens; and John O'Neill, with Malcolm Calder as Convenor.

This committee is to prepare this report for distribution to the 3775 community, local media and the Alliance.