



**WIMMERA MALLEE
WATER**

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2001 winner
savewater awards

Our Ref: CP07/0027
Your Ref:

SUBMISSION NO 64

3 September, 2002

Mr Ian Dundas
Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Secretary: *A. Keen*

RECEIVED

- 5 SEP 2002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES
AND FORESTRY

Dear Mr Dundas,

INQUIRY INTO FUTURE WATER SUPPLIES FOR AUSTRALIA'S RURAL INDUSTRIES AND COMMUNITIES

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above inquiry on behalf of Wimmera Mallee Water (WMW).

WMW is a rural water authority based in north-west Victoria servicing approximately 25% of the State. Its services and responsibilities are shown in *Attachment 1*.

The authority is unusual in that its prime services are stock and domestic supplies to 12% of Victoria and irrigation is only a minor part of its business. It is believed to be Australia's leading authority in terms of water efficiency improvement programs and returning water to the environment.

WMW supports the submissions made by the Association of Rural Water Authorities (ARWA) and the Victorian Water Industries Association (VicWater). Rather than repeat the views in those submissions, comments will be made in relation to three specific areas where Federal involvement is seen appropriate; *ie:-*

- ◆ Water saving programs.
- ◆ Water related social equity issues.
- ◆ Climate/weather research.

The Northern Mallee Pipeline Project (NMPP) is a major water saving project whereby WMW has replaced open channels across 650,000 hectares (ha) of the Northern Mallee, which has resulted in water savings of 50,000 megalitres per year (ML/yr), of which 35,000 ML/yr has been made available as environmental flows for the Wimmera and Glenelg Rivers. *See Attachments 2 and 3.*

This \$50 million program started in 1992 was completed very recently, on budget and on time. It has been strongly supported by the Federal Government with 37% of the total funding; (37% also came from the State and 25% from the local community).

The contribution from Governments was essentially for environmental flow water plus a contribution to improve the unsatisfactory security of supply for the total water system. The total resultant project benefits are much more extensive, such as:-

- ◆ *Environmental improvements* – improved streamflows, reduced salinity, less pest plants and animals, improved aquatic environments.

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Water ~
"Lifeblood of the
Wimmera Mallee"

- ◆ *On-farm benefits* – increased production, better drought protection, more usable land, and diversification opportunities.
- ◆ *Social benefits* – improved security, better water quality, and more equitable services.
- ◆ *Regional economic benefits* – water for new businesses, increased tourism.

NMPP illustrates the fundamental regional community benefits, which can be achieved by Federal partnerships with State Governments and local communities on basic water infrastructure. It also demonstrates that certainly in arid regions, water infrastructure is as essential as transport infrastructure and provides development, social and environmental benefits to very substantial areas.

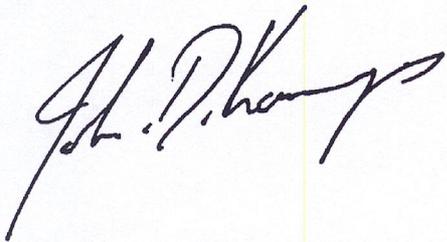
The Wimmera-Mallee community has decided to build on the proven outcomes of NMPP and developed a competent strategy to pipe the remainder of the open channel system on virtually a 50/50 partnership between the community and government. This Wimmera Mallee piping proposal is described in *Attachment 4* and would result in only 15% of the water being released to the fully piped system compared to the releases to the open channel system in 1990. The benefits to the environment are huge, equivalent to a line of Olympic swimming pools from Melbourne to Darwin being available each year for the environment.

There is also no doubt that the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline Project would be a national icon project to encourage similar major improvements elsewhere in Australia.

On the matter of weather and climate research, there appears to be very compelling reasons to upgrade Australia's expertise and research knowledge. In a largely arid country, there is potential for very major economic benefits from a weather/climate industry which is at the forefront of world's best practice.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment.

Yours sincerely,



JOHN D KONINGS
General Manager

Our Mission

Wimmera Mallee Water will continue to be a successful business and aims to be the leader in delivery of cost effective rural water services, which meet customer and community needs.

About Wimmera Mallee Water

Wimmera Mallee Water is a government-owned specialist rural water authority which, under the direction set by an eight-member skills based board, has the following roles:

- Filling up to 21,400 farm dams annually from an extensive open channel system.
- Management of an expanding piped supply network to northern Mallee farms and towns.
- Provision of bulk supply to 50 towns and industry.
- Management of twelve major headworks storages.
- Provision of irrigation water to 260 customers.
- Provision of recreational, environmental and compensation flows.
- Participation in natural resource planning.
- Management of stream diversions and groundwater resources.

In filling these roles, some 170,000 megalitres of water is released annually to customers, bulk water is supplied to three urban authorities and for environmental flows in two river systems, the Wimmera and Glenelg. These significant and diverse activities utilise some 120 staff, with a consequent boost to regional employment opportunities.

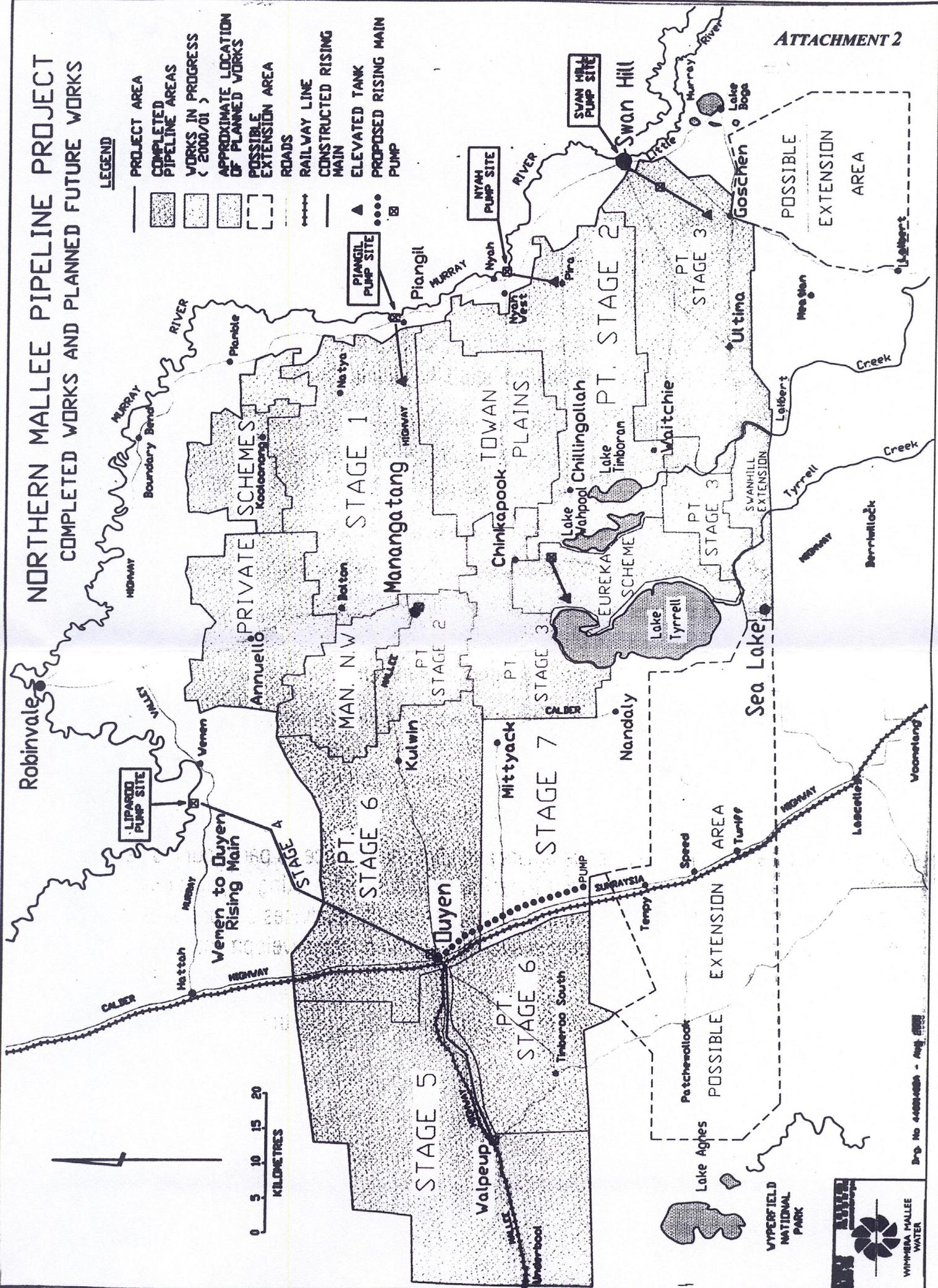
Wimmera Mallee Water regards its customers and customer service as paramount to its operations. It also believes that effective organisational decision making requires quality customer input. The extensive consultative committee structure advises on rural water services and plays an important role in providing customer views to policy development and business directions of the authority.

Wimmera Mallee Water is very grateful for their diligence and commitment.

NORTHERN MALLEE PIPELINE PROJECT COMPLETED WORKS AND PLANNED FUTURE WORKS

LEGEND

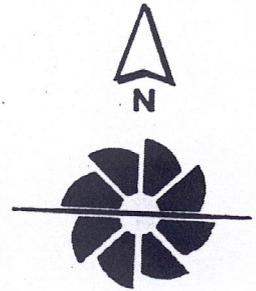
- PROJECT AREA
- COMPLETED PIPELINE AREAS
- WORKS IN PROGRESS (< 2000/01)
- APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF PLANNED WORKS
- POSSIBLE EXTENSION AREA
- ROADS
- RAILWAY LINE
- CONSTRUCTED RISING MAIN
- ELEVATED TANK
- PROPOSED RISING MAIN
- PUMP



Proj No 44001-0001 - Aug 1999



WIMMERA MALLEE WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM

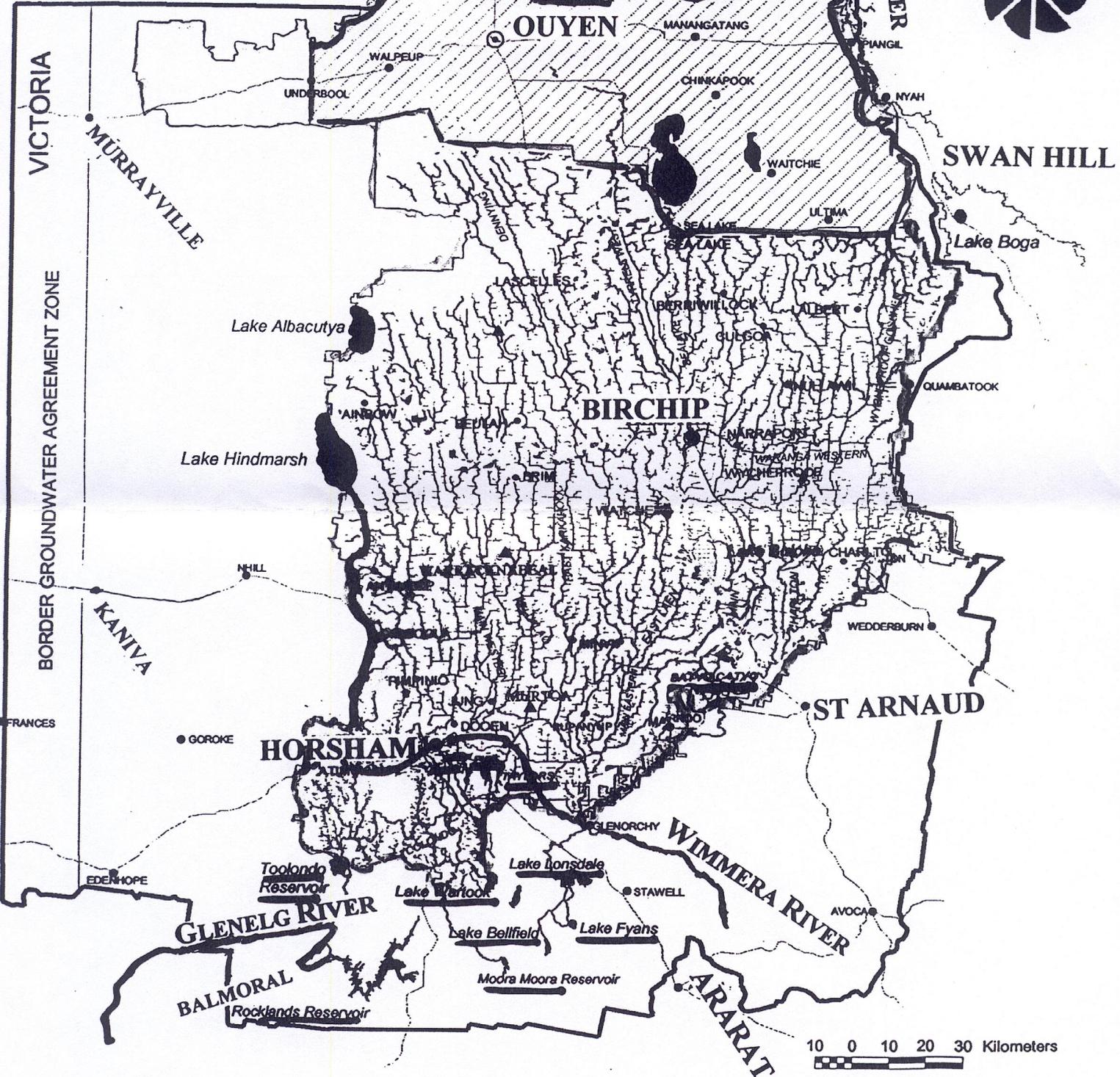


SOUTH AUSTRALIA

VICTORIA

MURRAY RIVER

SWAN HILL



BORDER GROUNDWATER AGREEMENT ZONE

MURRAYVILLE

KANIVA

FRANCES

GOROKE

EDERHOPE

GLENELG RIVER

BALMORAL
Rocklands Reservoir

HORSHAM

Toolondo Reservoir

Lake Wartook

Lake Lonsdale

Lake Bellfield

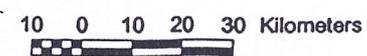
STAWELL

Lake Fyans

Moora Moora Reservoir

WIMMERA RIVER

ARARAT



Legend

- Waterworks District
- WMW Operational Area
- Northern Mallee Pipeline Project Area
- Main Channels

Wimmera-Mallee Piping Study

In September 2000, a feasibility study commenced which was led by a community-based steering committee and known as "Wimmera Mallee Sustainable Water Management Strategy". This Strategy builds on the successful \$50 million Northern Mallee Pipeline project which after ten years is due to be completed in July 2002 and will result in 600,000 ha of channel supplied area being piped and 50,000 megalitres per year of water releases from Grampians headworks replaced with 5,000 megalitres per year from the Murray River.

The feasibility study proposed that piping the rest of the channel system would involve:

- Replacing the remaining open channel system with a new pipeline system throughout 2.3 million hectares of the Wimmera Mallee region.
- A pipeline system with the capacity to deliver 27,000 megalitres per year to cater for current and future needs of the supply area.
- Allocating water saved by piping to the Wimmera, Glenelg and other river systems in the region, (up to an average annual volume of 83,000 megalitres); and for new economic developments outside the pipeline system, (nominal annual volume of 10,000 megalitres).

Clearly piping the system will have dramatic effects on Wimmera Mallee Water services during both these transitional and implementation phases. Strategies will be needed to move towards a fully piped system that will affect all aspects of the business including asset management, staffing and costs, as well as the future planning of some 5,000 farmers, seven municipalities and four catchment management authorities.

Wimmera Mallee Water sees the piping project as a vital environmental improvement initiative and an economic catalyst to encourage high value business ventures such as mineral sands mining and processing industries to develop in the region.

Western Victorian communities from Mildura to the coast have given strong endorsement for this project. The proposed 50% local funding demonstrates the community commitment to the project and supports the reasonable requests for 25% State and 25% Federal funding.

Currently funding has been provided by Government to advance the project to detail design phase. This will incorporate continued community consultation providing valuable information including confirmation of total costs through to pipe locations at a property level.

Wimmera Mallee Water also recognises the vision and commitment of the community leaders who initiated the study, obtained funding from Federal, State and Local governments, and have given many hundreds of voluntary hours to promoting the concept within and outside our region. It is to be hoped that their effort and spirit will be rewarded with practical results.