

***SUBMISSION TO  
THE HONOURABLE  
MR. R. WELFORD MLA  
Minister for Environment and Heritage and  
Minister for Natural Resources***

**WIVENHOE DAM  
TO ATKINSON DAM  
PIPELINE**

**Reference Group:**

Esk Shire Council  
Lower Lockyer Irrigators  
Australian Food Corporation  
Atkinson Buaraba Catchment Landcare Group

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## **CURRENT POSITION**

- ◆ Esk Shire has been drought declared since 5<sup>th</sup> September 1997, and Atkinson Dam has been empty since April 1998.
- ◆ Atkinson Dam is no longer a reliable source of irrigation water supply. In the last eight years it has supplied full allocation in 1993 and 1996 only. Due in part to recent policy to encourage more water use by irrigators.
- ◆ There is no piped water, raw or treated, supplied to Coominya Village.
- ◆ AFC Abattoirs have no provision of safe water supply for proposed expansion.
- ◆ The result is that jobs, current and potential, and the environment are at risk.
- ◆ Coominya Primary School numbers have reduced by 40% in four years due mainly to lack of water and its effect upon the community.
- ◆ DNR commissioned Scoping Study on Wivenhoe to Atkinson Pipeline recently completed.

## **PROPOSAL**

- ◆ To construct pumping facility and pipeline from Wivenhoe Dam to Atkinson Dam to supply Coominya village, A.F.C. Abattoir and Atkinson Dam Irrigators.
- ◆ To provide over 150 irrigators with a supplementary and secure water supply, leading to numerous business opportunities.
- ◆ To provide raw water for Coominya Village which Esk Shire Council can treat.
- ◆ To provide expansion capacity for AFCA, leading to numerous job opportunities.
- ◆ Proponents are prepared to make a contribution to the capital cost operation and maintenance.
- ◆ Scoping study report quantifies that the cost of the pipeline (\$13 million) can be recouped as flow on benefit to the community, worth \$45 to \$75 million in one year of operation.
- ◆ Report identifies that the project utilises water from Wivenhoe Dam that is currently in excess to requirements, and is just 3% of yield in a maximum use period.
- ◆ It is expected that this excess capacity would exist until 2023, allowing for planned population growth, and this project would bring forward the construction of new storage by just four years. This time frame could be improved with the implementation of better management of water.

## **BENEFITS**

- ◆ Better utilisations of Wivenhoe Dam resource, as an increasing number of urban customers are connected to water meters, and decrease water use in the short term.
- ◆ Secure water supply for Lower Lockyer Irrigation Scheme, and reduction of stream losses.
- ◆ The confidence gained from water security removes the prime impediment for farmers to be willing to secure long term export contracts.
- ◆ Irrigators would be able to invest in water efficient irrigation systems.
- ◆ Direct creation of jobs plus a 3 to 5 multiplier effect on job creation from primary production.
- ◆ Provides a big economic stimulus for the Lockyer Valley.
- ◆ System would supply an environmental flow into Lockyer Creek lower section, relieving water treatment expenses for Brisbane water supply at Mt. Crosby, by returning the creek to more stable, sustainable and natural environment and reducing turbidity in flood flows.
- ◆ Enable AFCA to access a water supply, which would provide absolute security for future developments.
- ◆ Pipeline route is near Coominya Village, which offers the opportunity for Esk Shire Council to install a local water treatment plant.

- ◆ Rural value adding businesses could be established and supplied along the pipeline route.
- ◆ No environmental or social impact concerns as with proposed additional large water storage schemes.
- ◆ Could be expanded to a second stage to deliver water for irrigation to the upper Buaraba Creek, and to Lake Clarendon Irrigation Scheme.
- ◆ All water is delivered within the Brisbane River Catchment.

## **IRRIGATORS POSITION**

- ◆ Estimated usage is based upon a supplementary supply for Atkinson Dam, equating to 11000 MI/year or 30MI/day maximum, on average 6600MI/year.
- ◆ Water is key to providing job security for 2250 people directly, plus a 3 to 5 times multiplier. This relates to about 11250 people.
- ◆ Jobs created during construction of the pipeline.
- ◆ Jobs created by increased labour intensive type crops, usually suitable for export.
- ◆ Reliability of supply means the ability to supply domestic and export contracts.
- ◆ Confidence to chase these contracts.
- ◆ Confidence to upgrade to water efficient irrigation systems.
- ◆ The nature of farm business in the region is with high labour input, and high cost (supplied from the community) however relatively low profit. Therefore the irrigators believe that the high community benefit can only be achieved through Government assistance for capital to enable the pipeline construction.
- ◆ This needs to be properly quantified in a feasibility study. However indications are that for farmers to be World Competitive then water costs can total no more than \$50/MI to Atkinson Dam.

- ◆ To increase the speed of development and to bring forward investment of growers then \$30/MI would be seen as attractive. This is more than double current water costs, without including those current costs of water delivery within the farm.
- ◆ Legislation controlling SEQWB is currently being reviewed and it is expected that irrigator access will be permitted.
- ◆ Due to uncertainty associated with the renewed water pipeline project irrigators feel that the Wivenhoe to Atkinson pipeline is a realistic solution which can be put in place now, and would be complementary in the future.

## **ESK SHIRE COUNCIL POSITION**

- ◆ Need to provide water supply to Coominya Village.
- ◆ Water supply required for expansion of industry at Coominya.
- ◆ Council supports Atkinson Dam rural sector in their aim of having reliable back-up water supply.
- ◆ Council is investigating supply options and funding sources.
- ◆ Council needs financial support to expand water supply.
- ◆ Subsidisation of water infrastructure costs is a better investment than welfare payments to unemployed people.

**AUSTRALAN FOOD CORPORATION AND**  
**AUSTRALIAN FOOD CORPORATION ABATTOIR**  
**POSITION**

- ◆ AFC/AFCA operate a Patty Plant and Abattoir located at Coominya.
- ◆ Production in the facilities currently utilises full rainfall run-off (in a normal rainfall seasoned year), and is stored in a 1500MI dam.
- ◆ Negotiations are in place to expand the operation, which could increase our current labour force by 100%, amounting to an extra 200 people.
- ◆ The limitations on expansions at both facilities, and indeed further expansion of our land can only take place with additional water supply. Catchment expansion is not achievable.
- ◆ It is therefore essential that for the growth of the AFC/AFCA operation, our water supply be supplemented.

## **LANDCARE GROUP POSITION**

- ◆ Atkinson Buaraba Catchment Landcare Group Inc. is a subcatchment based group, working in co-operation with Lockyer Catchment Coordinating Committee.
- ◆ Severe depletion of water resources, above and underground, has led to local community economic stagnation.
- ◆ Landholders are unable to spend money maintaining riparian management practice of erosion control and in especially weed control.
- ◆ Surface and underground supplies are in annual deficit of planned supply, and this results in quality depletion. Toxic blue green algae blooms in Atkinson Dam would be eliminated.
- ◆ Community is dependent upon water for irrigation.
- ◆ Supplementary supply from Wivenhoe to Atkinson Dam, which is then distributed through the reticulation system, would restore lower Lockyer Creek to its natural state, and thus the underground system, and would decrease blue green algae blooms in Atkinson Dam.
- ◆ Stable bed and banks would improve Brisbane City water supply, particularly following flood events.
- ◆ Irrigators would be encouraged to improve irrigation systems to more water efficient types, which could incorporate better chemical and nutrient management.
- ◆ The sum results in safer water quality and food quality, for the whole community, and national and export markets.
- ◆ These benefits would not occur if this project relies upon irrigators for user pays, and should be based upon community benefit.

## **REFERENCE GROUP POSITION**

- ◆ Propose establishment of a task force run by Department of State Development or Premiers Department, including the Reference Group and a representative from the Department for Natural Resources.
  - ◆ The task force would coordinate the proposed studies for the pipeline.
    - ◆ Feasibility study, detailed engineering study, Environmental Impact study, Native Title Search, Operational Management Study.
- ◆ Encourage legislation changes to South East Queensland Water Board Act, currently being reviewed, to allow irrigators access to Wivenhoe Dam.
- ◆ Suggest inclusion in Queensland Budget in September 1998 for feasibility study of proposal.