

I would like to send my warmest greetings to readers of local newspapers throughout Cardinia and Casey Councils, who will be reading this column for the first time.

I write this column to help share news about the Victorian Desalination Project and its progress, to answer questions raised by the community and to provide information that will assist with a fact-based understanding of the project.

One of the questions we're being asked more and more by communities along the pipeline is "what's happening on the desalination plant site?". Extending the reach of this column is one way that we can help you find out.



Plant site: The box cut is sprayed with concrete – a process known as 'shotcreting'

Our construction contractor, Thies Degrémont, is progressing well and earthworks are nearing completion.

The major focus is now on pouring concrete pilings and footings, which will be followed by concrete pads and structural steel for the pre-treatment and reverse osmosis buildings.

Our new Community Information Centre opened in Wonthaggi last week and is already welcoming a big increase in visitors. Not to take anything away from the wonderful team that works in the Centre, I suspect it may have something to do with the great coffee and the chocolate eclairs from Connells Bakery next door!



Pipeline: A crane lifts a pipe into place above the trench

On the pipeline and power alignment, we achieved an important milestone recently with the first pipe laid in Clyde North.

The pipeline will be 84 kilometres long, connecting the desalination plant to Melbourne and regional water networks.

It will comprise around 6200 sections of pipe, each 1.93 metres in diameter, 13.5 metres long and weighing 13 tonnes. Tyco Water in Melbourne won the \$150 million contract to manufacture the pipes at its Somerton facility, using Australian steel supplied by Bluescope Steel in Hastings.

During construction, there will be temporary road closures so please keep this in mind if you're travelling through the area and be aware of changed traffic conditions.

On the recruitment front, the interest in jobs has been overwhelming. Thies Degrémont has received around 14,500 applications, with very strong interest from locals.

If you haven't already applied and you're interested in any future opportunities, you can still register for job alerts on the AquaSure website.



A piling rig and crane at work installing concrete piles, which provide support for the pre-treatment structures.

In my last column, I asked readers for their feedback on the content of this column and I would like to thank those who took the time to contact me.

Today's column features some of your feedback – more news about what's happening on the construction front, more pictures, and more detailed questions and answers to overcome the misunderstandings I know are out there.

Regards,

Chris Herbert
CEO, AquaSure

QUESTION:

One of the readers who replied to my request for feedback was Ms Lyn Whitlam of Glen Forbes, whose letter appeared in a local paper last week.

I hope she will not mind me responding through this column, as she raised a number of questions about the new and complex concept of Renewable Energy Credits that I felt would interest others in the community.

ANSWER:

Our contract states that the operating power requirements for the plant and pipeline must be offset by a renewable energy source commissioned after 1 January 2007.

To address this contractual requirement, AquaSure has signed a 30 year contract with AGL to supply Renewable Energy Credits.

We will pay AGL to produce enough renewable energy to match the power consumption of the plant and pipeline, and inject it into the grid.

It's not unlike the 'green' energy options you may have signed up to at home, through your own power company.

The power AGL supplies will come mostly from a new wind farm being built in Western Victoria, but will also come from other renewable AGL resources.

It would be impractical to power the desalination plant directly with wind, solar, tidal or other green energy because they cannot provide a constant, reliable supply.

So, there will be no additional carbon emissions because of the desalination plant and transfer pipeline's electrical operation. 100 per cent of the electricity used in operating both the desalination plant and the transfer pipeline will be offset by the purchase of renewable energy credits.

This is a really important issue for all of us and I will keep talking about it to ensure that every reader understands the importance of this commitment that the Victorian Government and AquaSure have made.



Pipeline: Pipe sections are welded together