

AN UPDATE FROM AQUASURE

I am aware that there is considerable community interest in the construction of the marine components of the Victorian Desalination Project. I appreciate the importance you attach to protecting the marine environment and the creatures that inhabit it along the Bass Coast.

I wanted to take this opportunity to advise the local community that the first stage of this work is ready to begin and what it involves.

Construction involves two distinct activities – the first is land-based and is underground tunnelling. The second is sea-based and is the construction of the inlet and outlet structures.

Two tunnel boring machines (TBMs) are currently being assembled on site – one to build an intake tunnel, the other to build an outlet tunnel.

Thanks to the primary school children that participated in the TBM Naming Competition, both machines now have names – ‘Wonthaggi Maggie’ and ‘Rocking Ruby’!

The first of the TBMs will begin work this week, constructing the intake tunnel on a path that has been approved by the Independent Reviewer & Environmental Auditor.

The second TBM will begin work next month, constructing the outlet tunnel.

While the distance offshore of the intake and outlet tunnels is subject to final approval, it is proposed that the intake tunnel will terminate approximately 1.2 kilometres from the plant site, or 790 metres from the Williamsons Beach shoreline and the outlet tunnel will terminate approximately 1.5 kilometres from the plant site, or 1.1 kilometres from the shoreline.

Both tunnels will be built around 15–20 metres underground and Williamsons Beach will remain open to the public as normal, throughout construction.

Tunnel boring has been used on construction projects for more than 150 years and has proven to be a safe and environmentally sound method of tunnelling.

The TBMs have a rotating, cutting wheel at the front which can ‘bore’ through all types of soil and rock. The cutter head excavates a length of ground, which is then lined with pre-cast concrete rings, forming a watertight concrete tunnel.

Given that the TBMs work so deep underground, the risk of any disturbance is extremely low. No percussive construction methods or blasting techniques are involved.

The tunnels will not begin operating until the EPA has issued an operating license to allow the discharge of seawater concentrate.

The second part of the marine works is the construction of the seawater intake and outlet structures on the seabed. This work is quite separate to tunnelling and is scheduled to begin in October, depending on weather patterns in Bass Strait.

The design and siting of these structures has been through an exhaustive environmental assessment process and is currently being considered by the EPA for compliance with the EPA Works Approval.

We expect this assessment to be carried out over July and August at which time, pending approval, we will be able to share information with you about the approved site of the marine structures, what they will look like and how they will perform.

I will continue to keep you updated on the progress of construction.

In the meantime, if you would like any further information, please don’t hesitate to call or drop in at the Community Information Centre at 33–35 Murray Street, Wonthaggi.

Regards



Chris Herbert CEO, AquaSure

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