

AN UPDATE FROM AQUASURE

Over the past week or so, you may have noticed some large construction machinery heading to the desalination plant site. Our construction contractor, Thiess Degrémont, is preparing to commence the first stage of earthworks at the plant site.

This is an exciting milestone that signals the first stage of a project that will help secure Victoria's water future. It's also an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to keeping you informed about the project and what you can expect during the different stages of works.

Earthworks will involve the forming of hardstand areas for car parking, construction of access roads and excavation of the building site for the new desalination plant.

Excavated spoil will be kept on site and used to construct a series of dunes that will serve as noise and visual barriers during construction and into the future, and will also form an important part of the overall landscaping design on the site.

Over the coming weeks, you may notice an increasing number of large earthmoving machines, passenger vehicles and delivery trucks accessing the site. While some noise is likely due to the nature of the work, it is not expected to be significant or continuous.

Noise monitoring and air quality monitoring has already commenced on the site and water trucks will be in operation to assist with dust management in accordance with the strict environmental performance requirements for the project. Geotechnical, flora and fauna and cultural heritage surveys have all been completed in the area in which we will be working, and survey of the remainder of the site will continue over the coming months.

In terms of workforce numbers, this is a good time to address recent reports suggesting that the town will be inundated by workers in the next few weeks. I can confirm this is not the case.

We currently have around 50 workers on the plant site and by Christmas time there will be around 200. Numbers will continue to increase throughout the first half of next year, reaching around 500 on site by March 2010 and then peaking at around 1200 by November 2010.

We will maintain this peak workforce through to July 2011, when staff numbers will start to decrease until completion of the project in December 2011.

These workforce numbers include tradesmen and labourers. We will start recruiting for these roles over the next month or so and I would encourage as many locals as possible to apply.

On that front, I'm pleased to announce that we recently recruited our first local engineer, site secretary and community relations officers to the project team. They will play a vital role in keeping you informed about the project and answering any questions you may have.

The project is already fully funded but now that it is 'real', other financial institutions in Australia and overseas are expressing an interest in participating. As you read this column, several of us are travelling in Asia and Europe to discuss the project with banks to which of them want to participate.

The success in getting the project up and running in this difficult climate has boosted confidence, helping other projects secure finance to go ahead. That means more jobs and a faster recovery for the Victorian and Australian economies.

Many commentators have praised the Government's strong support for the project as important in getting it started and in establishing a better finance model for projects when times are tough.

Regards



Chris Herbert
CEO, AquaSure

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