



Hunter Wine Country Private Irrigation District

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Hunter Environment Lobby v Minister and Ashton Coal.

Hunter Wine Country Private Irrigation District [HWC PID]

Hunter Valley Wine Industry Association.

Background summary of Hunter Wine Country PID.

The Hunter Wine Country Private Irrigation District pipeline is a community initiated, funded and constructed irrigation water distribution system serving **450** vineyards, golf courses and tourism facilities in the Pokolbin district. The project is expected to provide up to 600 jobs and stimulate \$140,000,00 of private investment [1999]

This underground pipeline, completed in **February 2000**, was designed, constructed and operational in 26 weeks. It is 130km of modified PVC pressure pipe ranging in size from 80mm to 450mm. There are a total of 11 pumping stations housing 38 pumps with a total pumping power of 1300kw. The pumps and service meters are controlled by a remote SCADA/telemetry system. Annual water delivery over 5,024 megalitres to an area of 500km² with 150km² being irrigated.

The project was established under the Private Irrigation Districts Act 1973 and is the largest privately owned and operated scheme under this legislation. The pipeline effectively drought proofs the vineyards of the Pokolbin district and was established under the Private Irrigation Districts Act 1973, it is the largest privately owned and operated scheme of its type.

This project is testimony to the ability of the community to work with 2 local councils, the State and Federal Governments to establish community infrastructure on time on budget.



The initial investment was \$10m. Financed with 20 year debenture with the CBA Bank. Annual repayments of \$ 773,000.

The HWC PID is a non profit legislated body. Annual income \$ 1.75 m.

Members pay an annual rate on their allocation, plus a usage charge for additional water they have delivered over 50% of their allowable/ designated allocation.

A management team manage the daily operation, any repairs and upgrades of the pipeline.

The electricity account alone for the 2012/13 year was over \$360,000.

As per the State Water usage guidelines, water is ordered for our projected daily use. That can vary between 6 megilitre and up 25 megilitre per day.

Our normal usage is approximately 16 megilitre per day, providing there is sufficient water in the river to supply our pumps.

Our members have used over 3500 megilitre in one season.

Several larger vineyards have 100 megilitre allocation.

3 golf courses have a total 450 megilitre allocation;

The Hunter Valley Gardens allocation is 375 megilitre.

The PID members must have onsite storage facility.

It is not a on demand system similar urban water supplies. The PID system is designed to deliver one eighth of members allocation per month to each member when they order water.

Our high demand months are summer, December & January.

It is necessary for members to have the onsite storage, to ensure they have adequate water for this period, as the PID is unable to pump equal to the possible demand at that time of the season.

Should there be an interruption to the water supply from the Hunter River e.g. the salinity level increases and we unable to pump water from the river, the health of the grape vines will suffer, the vine yields decrease, the viability of the investment lost. Winemakers will then not be able to satisfy the demand of the high quality product lines.

The other tourist associated businesses will also be affected. The golf courses, Hunter Valley Gardens, and other tourist attractions rely on a reliable water to ensure the properties remain attractive to the tourists.

The HWC PID area is reportable No 2 tourist destination for NSW outside Sydney

Over 2.2m overnight visitors annually + day trippers

Worth \$ 520 m Annually

Employ over 2500 people

3000 beds

And substantial Infrastructure investment – 4 major establishments/properties, have investments in excess of \$ 500 m.

The PID requires a reliable water supply to ensure the appeal to the tourists is maintained & that the vineyards remain viable with supplementary irrigation available.

Water Quality.

Water quality is constantly monitored during our pumping operation. We have installed a monitor that detects the salinity levels whilst pumping. That is set at 1000 ec's.

Should the salinity level exceed this level, our pumping system will stop automatically.

As per the attachment, the salinity levels in the Hunter River at the monitor Upstream of Singleton, over 20 klms upstream from our meter, are approaching those limits now. .

As discussed previously, should the salinity levels reach 1000 EC's our pumping system will automatically turn off. We will then need to monitor the level on our meter before restarting our pumps when salinity levels have decreased adequately.

We have experienced on previous occasions this in fact happening, in particular when river flows are very low.

Since the introduction of The Salinity Trading Scheme many years ago, the salinity levels in the Hunter River Water had improved by 50%. That is, the salinity levels are now half what they were previously. EPA are currently reviewing the scheme.

The "HITS" [live] monitoring system is a great tool of assistance in managing the available water to users along the Hunter River.

Our Concerns

Simply, should the Ashton mine be approved through this Court process, The Hunter Wine Country PID would want a system in place to ensure;

Our continuity of water supply is maintained.
The quality of water available is maintained.

Should there be a major failure and either of the above, that there is a simple process for **compensation** to members of the PID and other irrigators on the Hunter River to compensate their loss of income

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