

WAFarmers Esperance-Ravensthorpe Zone

SUBMISSION TO THE ECONOMIC REGULATION AUTHORITY



**The Western Australian
Farmers Federation (Inc.)**

Re: GOLDFIELDS WATER SUPPLY PROJECT

The WAFarmers Esperance-Ravensthorpe Zone would like the ERA to consider the value of having the United Utilities pipeline installed from Esperance to Kalgoorlie and the many benefits the project would bring to the farming community.

At present, agriculture in the region is dependent on the annual rainfall for the production of food and fibre. This is the challenge of broadacre agriculture with the reliance of the various seasons and what farmers have to manage and farm accordingly.

Farmers have to capture and store water on-farm, from that gathered by various means to provide water for stock, crop management and production as well as domestic supplies.

OPPORTUNITIES

Until now, farmers in the region have been limited with their use of water and have limited opportunity to expand their production base due to seasonal conditions.

We see the opportunity to tap into the water pipeline that will pass many farming properties as a new chapter in agriculture for the region.

This region is renowned for its farmers being innovative, ahead of their peers and up to date with technology, produce and marketing, Australia wide.

There are a variety of benefits that farmers see that could be capitalised on with the addition of water as a viable, reliable resource.

EXISTING INDUSTRIES

Cropping

Broadacre cropping of cereals and legume crops require the input of water for the application of spraying. On an average property of 2000 hectares, 400,000 litres of water would be used on an annual basis for spraying of crops.

At times, primarily when the annual average rainfall is low, this water is not always available on farm. The water has to be carted in by road transport from where ever it can be sourced.

Animal Husbandry

Farmers in the region have experienced two dry years out of the last three years. This has led to the requirement of transportation of water to feed stock. This could occur within the farm or by road transport from off farm water sources. One cow will consume up to 60 litres of water a day in summer. Water is used also in animal welfare for treatment of diseases.

To know that a reliable, potable water supply is available would be an economic gain for farmers, preventing them from having to sell stock in dry periods when the market is swamped with stock and market prices have been driven down.

Feedlotting

Feedlotting of stock has been tried here and is a growth industry where unlimited underground water is available. Farms that border the proposed water pipeline, after closing down their feedlots due to the recent poor rainfall, would reopen their feedlots knowing a reliable water supply is available – a primary requirement to carrying stock on any property.

NEW INDUSTRIES

Aquaculture, horticulture, viticulture and the equine industry are just some industries that have been established here, but have restricted opportunities of growth without a reliable supply of water.

High value products such as seed potatoes, bagged cereals, produce for human consumption and pelletised stock feed would be produced in the district with a reliable water supply available, and their transportation through containerisation at the Port promotes great opportunities for these products.

DIVERSIFICATION

Farm land acquisition will continue to happen in the region. The majority of land ownership is family farm businesses. With growth of these properties comes the ability to involve more family members. This will lead to diversification of businesses to suit the needs of individual members in the family unit.

The opportunity to research and develop niche industries would provide economic as well as social benefits to these businesses and the region, promoting growth and sustainability of the family farming enterprise, as well as other enterprises.

CURRENT INFRASTRUCTURE

The Esperance Port is upgrading its facilities to support containerisation. This will lead directly to the introduction of new products that could be shipped out through this facility.

The area already has in place infrastructure that promotes daily transport to and from Perth. With the Esperance Port, two flights daily through the Esperance Airport and six overnight road freight companies to move produce to and from Perth, and onwards from there, water supply can be seen as a great limiting factor in many industries locally.

SUMMARY

We believe the ERA draft report has failed to consider the opportunities for economic development that the United Utilities Goldfields Water Supply project would create for our region and industries.

Existing food and fibre industries of broadacre cropping, beef and sheep production and restricted aquaculture, horticulture and viticulture industries, to name a few, would benefit immediately from a reliable water supply.

Given the opportunity, through reliable water supplies, the introduction of new industries, prosperity of existing industries and the opportunity for diversification will offer our region great development opportunities and economic growth.

We believe this project should proceed, and we hope that your final report will reflect this statement.

Marg Agnew
President
WAFarmers – Esperance/Ravensthorpe Zone