

# Southern Wimmera & Northeast Pyrenees Water Supply Feasibility Study



## Project overview

Communities in the districts north of Avoca and between Elmhurst, Beazley's Bridge and Glenorchy are primarily reliant on rainfall runoff for domestic and stock water supplies. During extended periods of drought in the past two decades water security and access have been severely impacted. This project could improve water access and security for drought affected communities and expand the water grid.

In March 2021 a public meeting held at Natte Yallock involving a range of key stakeholders and members of the community was facilitated to explore longer term, strategic water supply options for the areas described above.

The Victorian Farmers Federation and Northern Grampians Shire Council have also advised the interests of the farming communities between Navarre, Beazley's Bridge and Glenorchy in having access to a more secure water supply.

The lack of a reliable water supply threatens the long-term viability of many local agribusinesses and future investment and development in the region. This lack of a reliable water supply has also adversely impacted on the availability of water for social and recreational pursuits, water for essential fire-fighting requirements and for environmental purposes.

In response to the lack of water security experienced in the region, the Pyrenees Shire Council has been successful in receiving funding to investigate the feasibility of a permanent stock and domestic water supply for this region.

## About the Study

GWMWater has been approached by the Pyrenees Shire Council to investigate the feasibility of extending the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline to provide water to the farm gate in parts of the Pyrenees, Northern Grampians and Central Goldfields Shire's where surface catchment dams have become unreliable.

The study will look at options to provide a dependable rural water supply, utilising existing water infrastructure and storages where possible and considering how to accommodate future growth. The introduction of a piped water supply could also provide significant environmental, social and economic benefits to the region.

This study, if proven feasible, would then proceed to Business Case and identify funding partners and funding options at a future stage of the project.

If feasible, a pipeline extension will reach into agricultural areas in the Southern Wimmera and Northeast Pyrenees area north, and north west of Avoca, where productivity and growth could be enhanced through a more secure water supply.

The feasibility study is for a raw (non-potable) supply only and does not include potable (drinking) water upgrades.



## What is the study area?

The feasibility concept area to be investigated encompasses approximately 354,219 hectares of land in the Southern Wimmera and Northeast Pyrenees region. The area under investigation extends northwards from Avoca and encompasses the areas around Natte Yallock, Bealiba and Stuart Mill. To the west, the concept area includes Moonambel, Navarre, Campbells Bridge and up to Beazleys Bridge.

The area under consideration falls within the boundaries of the Northern Grampians Shire Council, the Pyrenees Shire and Central Goldfields Shire Council. An indicative concept boundary has been provided at the end of this fact sheet, although the final area will largely be determined by the extent of landholder interest.

## Why a piped water supply?

A pipeline providing water to currently unserved areas may:

- > Allow existing agricultural enterprises to consolidate and expand knowing they have access to a reliable, high quality water supply 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- > Encourage new enterprises and investment to the region with the certainty of continued access to water.
- > Provide scope for an alternative raw water source to townships within the concept boundary.
- > Increase environmental/cultural benefits associated with local landscapes, waterways and wetlands by relieving some of the reliance on catchment dams to intercept water.

Additional benefits may include:

- > Enhanced well-being and safety of the community by creating a sustainable lifestyle in the form of increased recreational opportunities and subsequent quality of life.
- > Increased access to water for fire-fighting and assisting with clean water for recovery efforts.
- > Improved water security and resilience through the interconnection of existing water supply infrastructure.
- > Increased employment with direct and indirect jobs during construction and ongoing long-term jobs.

Connecting to a rural pipeline supply will:

- > Improve your ability to plan your stocking or cropping activities for the medium to long term.
- > Reduce your reliance on catchment dams and water carting in dry times.
- > Improve your on-property water management using our free online customer portal.
- > Sustain an agricultural sector that underpins this region.
- > Open up future opportunities that are currently limited by availability of water.

## Who is funding the feasibility study?

Regional Development Victoria are funding the feasibility study under the Investment Fast-Track Fund.

## What is being funded?

The feasibility study involves the development of a feasibility report, identifying and determining affordable supply options and indication of the level of interest that will meet the need of the Southern Wimmera and Northeast Pyrenees region.

## Who is involved in the feasibility study?

To oversee the development of the feasibility study, a Project Steering Committee has been established to investigate and report on water supply options in the Southern Wimmera and Northeast Pyrenees area. A Pyrenees Shire Council representative will Chair the Project Steering Committee. The steering committee is made up of representatives from:

- > Pyrenees Shire Council
- > GWMWater
- > Central Highlands Water
- > Northern Grampians Shire Council
- > Central Goldfields Shire Council
- > Goulburn Murray Water
- > North Central Catchment Management Authority
- > Wimmera Catchment Management Authority
- > Regional Development Victoria
- > Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
- > Agriculture Victoria
- > Registered Aboriginal Corporation/s
- > Traditional Owners
- > Victorian Farmers Federation

The Pyrenees Shire Council reserve the right to co-opt additional members to the group from special interest groups or from people with requisite specialist skills should the need arise.

To facilitate this engagement, the Pyrenees Shire Council is establishing a Community Consultative Committee. The role of this committee is to support the steering committee to investigate the demand for a more reliable water supply in the Southern Wimmera and Northeast Pyrenees area.

Specifically, the Community Consultative Committee will represent the views of potential customers of a piped water supply. This will help to identify the social, economic and environmental benefits and impacts of the feasibility study and project development.

### **If feasible, what will happen next?**

The next phase of the project, if funded, would be to produce a full business case that determines the preferred solution and investigates the likely costs involved to construct and supply water. When complete, the business case can be used to seek additional infrastructure funding to complete the required works.

### **Where will the water come from?**

The source of water is being investigated as part of the feasibility study. A component of the study will ensure that no existing customer is adversely impacted by the addition of new customers proposed under this scheme.

Our initial investigation suggests there is capacity within GWMWater's existing allocations to source water potentially from the Grampians region, or a combination of a number of sources. Additional sources of water will also be investigated as part of the feasibility study.

### **Who can connect?**

If progressed to the project stage, the project will be designed to service rural landholders identified within the concept boundary shown on the indicative map below. Landholders outside of the concept boundary scope that are interested in connecting are still encouraged to register an expression of interest.

### **Do I have to connect?**

Landholders will have the opportunity to 'opt-in' and will not be required to connect if they are not interested.

The feasibility of the project will however depend on the number of landowners wanting to connect to the pipeline and may not proceed if sufficient interest cannot be demonstrated.

### **What is the cost likely to be?**

A project of this scale would require contributions from third parties such as the State and Commonwealth Government. A business case will need to be presented, outlining commitments from landowners as well as additional social and environmental benefits the project would be expected to achieve.

Whilst the full cost to landholders and/or the community is not yet known, based on similar rural pipeline infrastructure projects, landholders/farming enterprises could expect to contribute between \$15,000 and \$40,000. Payment options through GWMWater would be made available.

Negotiated contributions may occur for landholders considered an intensive water user and will take into consideration infrastructure requirements, expected usage and site-specific requirements. Properties under 40 hectares not rated as a farm enterprise by the local council may have a lower contribution requirement.

There may also be scope for recreational water users nominated by the councils to have a lower contribution cost.

In addition to the contribution costs, landowners would be required to purchase a water allowance and pay ongoing service fees for water usage as per existing rural water customers of GWMWater. Please refer to GWMWater's Rural Pipeline Products and Charges Fact Sheet located on our website at [gwmwater.org.au/charges](http://gwmwater.org.au/charges)

### **Do water restrictions apply to us if we are connected to GWMWater?**

The rural pipeline water allowance is a high security product. It is considered to have a reliability of about 93 percent, meaning that in 93 years out of 100 the full allocation will be available. In the remaining seven years out of every 100 years there may need to be some level of restrictions.

## Will there be benefits to water users on town supply?

There may be scope within this project to provide an alternative raw water source to townships within the concept boundary.

## What do I have to do if I am interested in a more secure water supply for my property?

Lodge an Expression of Interest (EOI) form to GWMWater. By lodging an EOI form you are registering your interest in hearing more about the potential to connect your property to a secure non-potable water supply. The lodgement of an EOI is not binding and designed primarily to give the steering committee an indication of the level of interest for further investigations and funding.

EOIs can be submitted to GWMWater by visiting GWMWater's website:  
[gwmwater.org.au/swnep-study](http://gwmwater.org.au/swnep-study)

The EOI form can also be submitted in person at scheduled information sessions or emailed to [info@gwmwater.org.au](mailto:info@gwmwater.org.au)

Please get in touch with GWMWater if you require assistance filling in your EOI form.

## How do I find out more?

Information sessions will be held across the region to inform the community and landholders about the feasibility study. To find out more please refer to your local council or visit [gwmwater.org.au/swnep-study](http://gwmwater.org.au/swnep-study)

Contact details:

GWMWater on 1300 659 961  
[info@gwmwater.org.au](mailto:info@gwmwater.org.au)

Pyrenees Shire Council on 1300 797 363  
[pyrenees@pyrenees.vic.gov.au](mailto:pyrenees@pyrenees.vic.gov.au)

Northern Grampians Shire Council on 03 5358 8700  
[ngshire@ngshire.vic.gov.au](mailto:ngshire@ngshire.vic.gov.au)

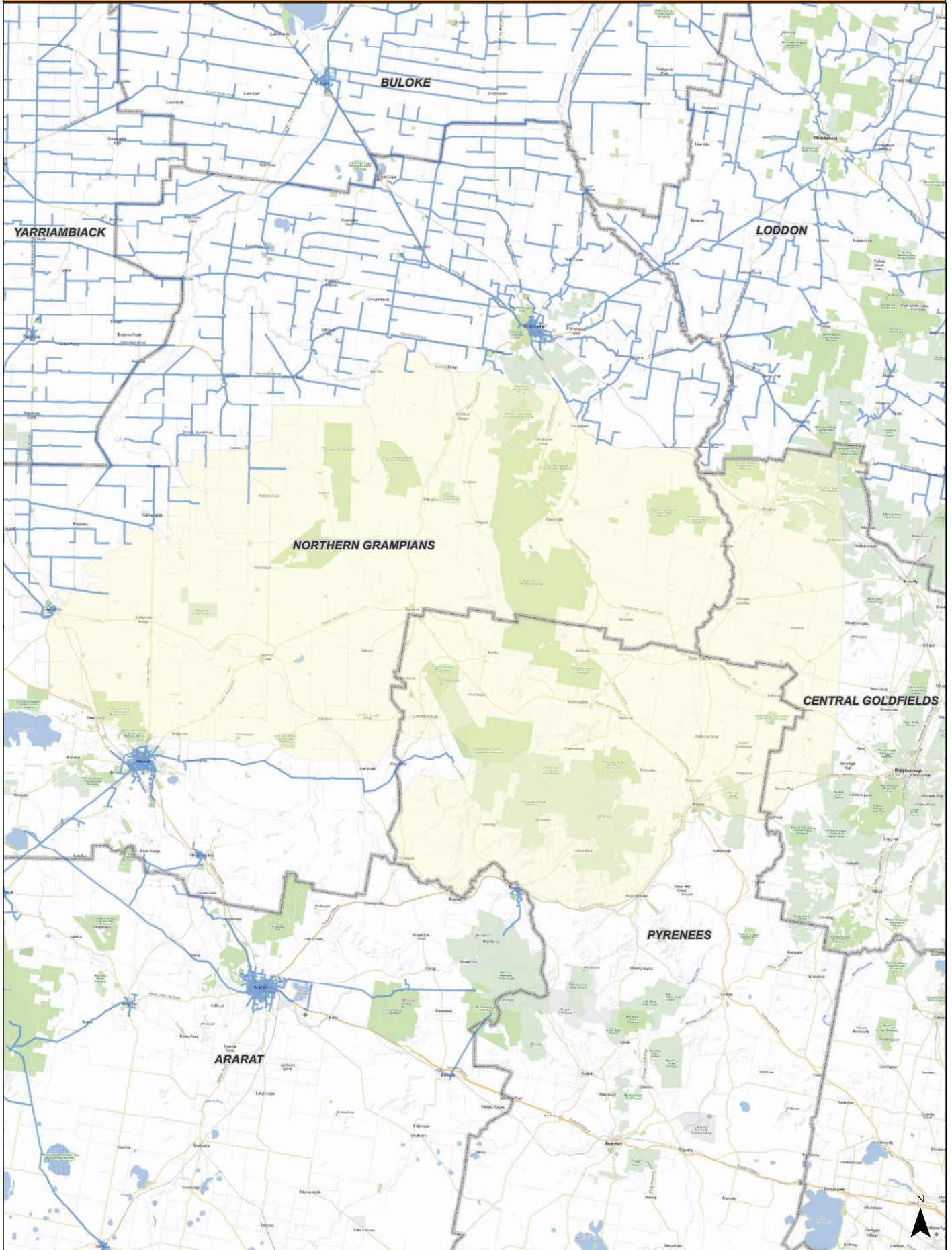
Central Goldfields Shire Council on 03 5461 0610  
[mail@cgoldshire.vic.gov.au](mailto:mail@cgoldshire.vic.gov.au)

You can also visit GWMWater's website at [gwmwater.org.au](http://gwmwater.org.au) to access the following information:

- > About GWMWater
- > Expression of Interest form
- > On-farm benefits of a piped water supply
- > Rural pipeline products and charges
- > On-farm water reticulation
- > Rural Customer Charter



Southern Wimmera and North East Pyrenees Rural Water Supply Feasibility Study Concept Area



**Legend**

- GWM Water Existing Assets
- Local Government Areas
- Study Area

