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MEDIA RELEASE

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Alternatives for securing Hamilton's water

Growing objections to connecting Hamilton to the Wimmera Mallee system have prompted calls to investigate piping water from the south says David Koch, Member for Western Victoria.

Speaking in Parliament this week, Mr Koch said it has been suggested the Hamilton-Grampians pipeline will supply two billion litres of water each year to the Hamilton district from the anticipated water savings achieved through piping the Wimmera Mallee open channel system.

“At the moment two options are currently being considered. One is a 47 kilometre connection to Rocklands reservoir and the other is a 44 kilometre connection to Moora Moora reservoir.

“It will be at least a year before survey and design of the pipeline route is finalised and not until at least 2010 before the pipeline construction is completed.

“Two thirds of the \$30 million cost is to be met by local users who will have to endure an 85 per cent increase in their water tariffs to pay for this infrastructure”.

Mr Koch said that while water savings from piping the Wimmera Mallee will be very welcome, this water should initially be delivered to the Glenelg River in compensation and environmental flows that have been denied in recent years and then any additional water savings should be allocated to regional development.

“Faced with grim predictions about the impact of climate change and increased population growth in regional centres like Hamilton, there is clearly a need to secure water supplies in the immediate future.

“However, there is concern in the Hamilton community that instead of taking precious water from the Wimmera Mallee, a region that will be under ever-increasing stress with predictions of reduced rainfall, surely Hamilton should be sourcing water from the south, where forecast rainfall is higher.

“An opportunity exists far closer to Hamilton that would provide better long-term security for Hamilton's water supply. Water allocated and accessed from the Condah groundwater management area would not only be a more reliable solution, but would require a pipeline of only 35 kilometres over a far less arduous route than that from the north.

“The Hamilton community knows that users will have to meet a large part of the cost of securing new water supply, but it wants assurances that the most appropriate and cost-effective solution is implemented. The community also wants assurances it will be consulted before it is committed to funding a final decision.

“I have called on the Minister for Water, John Thwaites, to give an undertaking that through community consultation, innovative proposals will be investigated so that only the most affordable water resource is utilised for the Hamilton community”, said Mr Koch.

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