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MEDIA RELEASE

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Farmers may be forced to connect to pipeline

Farmers south-west of Horsham may be forced to pay water rates even if they remain unconnected to the Wimmera-Mallee Pipeline.

Management policy of Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water states all lands currently within the channel supply system and within the designed Wimmera-Mallee Pipeline network are to be automatically classified and rated as property capable of being supplied with water.

Speaking in Parliament this week, David Koch, Member for Western Victoria, said landowners should not have to pay for access to the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline just because it passes through their property.

“Landowners in Supply System 6 have never been rated in the past although the channel system runs through their properties.

“Their properties have not been connected to the channel system as they are self sufficient in water. Over the years, they have undertaken a great deal of work to ensure natural water run-off is harvested and stored for stock and domestic use and as a consequence, they will not need to be connected to the pipeline. Their well-established catchment infrastructure provides adequate water supplies for livestock and domestic use.

“If landowners are forced to connect to the new pipeline they will have the added expense of installing tanks, troughs, pipes, fittings and the laying of pipe. I understand that the cost of this infrastructure is likely to be over \$70,000 for a fully rated farm of 1500 hectares, a severe financial burden to many farmers.

“The unnecessary expense of duplicating an existing functional water delivery system will mean farmers will have to maintain two systems.

“As unrated farmers do not have representation on GMW Water’s Wimmera Domestic and Stock Consultative Committee, their views have not been sought and they are concerned they are not being consulted or informed of decisions that will affect their farming operations.

“Farmers, especially those who have no need to be connected to the pipeline, do not want their unrated land automatically classified for rating purposes.

“If piped water is not required there should be no service fee as is the case with gas, telephone and electricity.

“Furthermore, once the pipeline system has been implemented, all water rate payers, whether they use the water or not, will be subject to future service fee increases, which may be substantial due to the Brumby Government’s poor management of water assets.

“The Minister for Water, Tim Holding, should revoke this compulsory and unpopular rating regime on areas not needing connection to the piped supply and remove this unnecessary burden on currently unrated landowners,” David Koch said.

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