

PROPOSED TOOWOOMBA TO WARWICK PIPELINE

In January 2020, Warwick's Leslie Dam was down to less than 4.6 per cent capacity and, without further inflows, it was predicted that Leslie Dam would have run out in late 2020.

Rainfall in the Southern Downs region has alleviated the short-term risk to Stanthorpe and Warwick's water supply. However, there is still an ongoing risk that poor rainfall will once again lead to shortfalls in the region's water supply, so work is continuing to ensure that we are best prepared to respond to the next severe drought.

A proposed Toowoomba to Warwick Pipeline has been identified as a viable potential drought contingency measure. In April 2021, the Queensland Government announced funding for the Southern Downs Drought Resilience Package. The package comprises several projects, including investigative works for the proposed pipeline. These investigations involve:

- testing community views on the proposal
- detailed design
- cost estimates
- environmental approvals
- surveying
- geotechnical investigations.

These works will inform a decision about whether or not the pipeline should be built.

In addition, an independent engineer has been engaged to assess Toowoomba's ongoing water security and options so that the community can have confidence in Toowoomba's water security.

A raw water¹ pipeline would extend south from the existing raw water pipeline system between Wivenhoe Dam and Toowoomba, across approximately 100 kilometres, and could provide a drought contingency raw water supply to Warwick's water system.

While Warwick would only draw on water from the proposed pipeline as needed when other local supplies are depleted, the draft pipeline design also considers Toowoomba's water security needs and could enable the future provision of a daily raw water supply to the Toowoomba Regional Council satellite towns of Cambooya, Greenmount, Nobby and Clifton.

The water to be delivered to Warwick would be allocated to them by Seqwater and would not come from water allocated to Toowoomba.

The preparatory and investigative works for the proposed pipeline will address water security, ongoing operating costs and the pipeline route relative to towns along the way, all of which will contribute to a final decision about whether to proceed.

The Southern Downs Drought Resilience Package identifies other local water sources that will help provide drought contingency for Warwick. Local water sources could partially supplement a pipeline, reducing costs of water taken from Wivenhoe Dam. However, these local sources alone will not be sufficient, and the pipeline would be an important element in providing a resilient supply during drought.

Toowoomba's water security

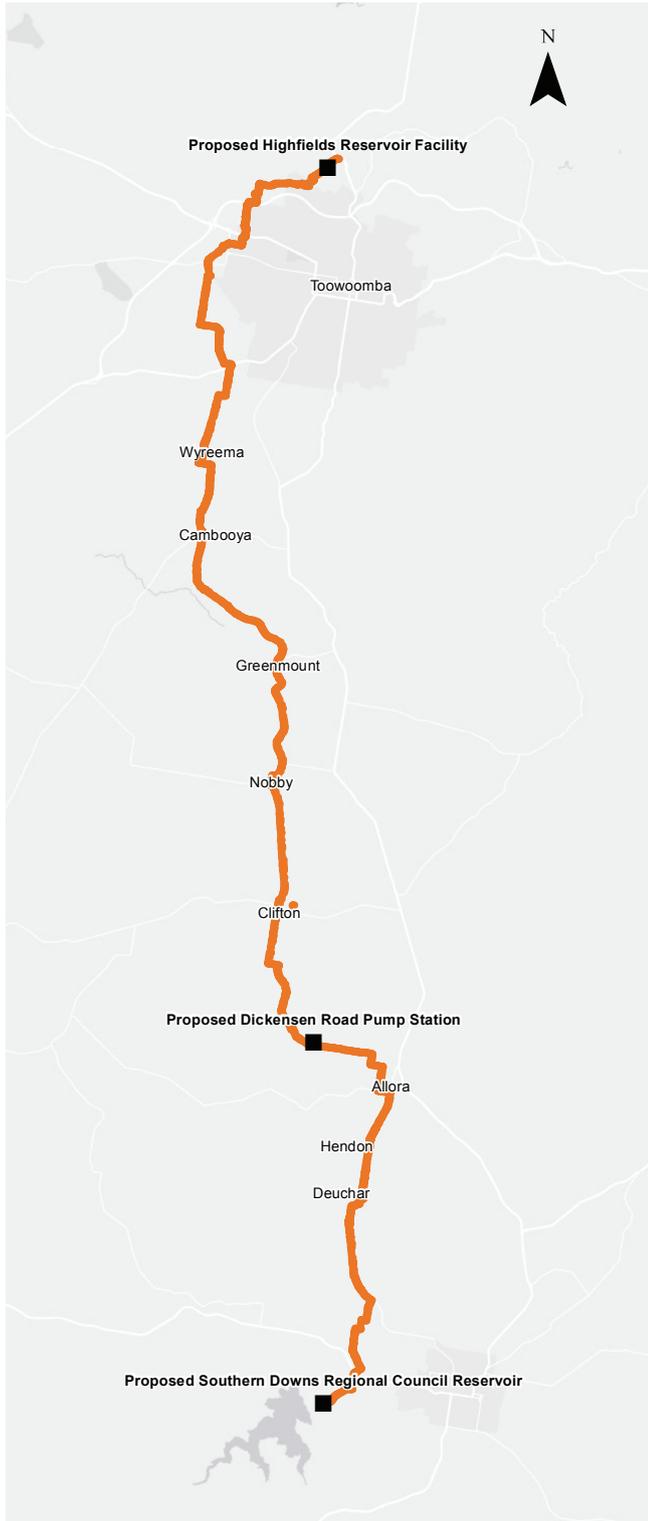
Toowoomba Regional Council has been considering building its own pipeline to provide a permanent water supply to the communities of Cambooya, Greenmount, Nobby and Clifton. The proposed Toowoomba to Warwick pipeline has been designed so that it can meet that need. This could save the council some significant capital costs of connecting those communities to its water system.

The pipeline capacity would be designed to meet the needs of both Toowoomba and Southern Downs regional councils. In addition, an independent engineer has been engaged to assess Toowoomba's ongoing water security and options so that the community can have confidence in Toowoomba's water security.

Should the proposed Toowoomba to Warwick Pipeline proceed, adequate agreements would be put in place to ensure the security of Toowoomba's existing water supply.

The water which would be sent to Warwick through this proposed pipeline would not come from the water allocated to Toowoomba.

¹ Raw water is water drawn from rivers, streams and lakes which is transported to a water treatment plants for treatment before being supplied as drinking water.



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Proposed pipeline route

Should the decision be made that a pipeline from Toowoomba to Warwick is necessary, the current proposed route passes near the communities of Wyreema, Cambooya, Greenmount, Nobby, Clifton and Allora, terminating at the Southern Downs Regional Council's reservoir, near Leslie Dam. The route selection was guided by various factors including the opportunity to provide raw water to towns along the route.

Termination points

Earlier plans showed the proposed pipeline terminating at the Warwick Water Treatment Plant. As planning and design has progressed, it has become clear that connecting the proposed pipeline directly into Council's reservoir near Leslie Dam would be a better option from a technical, operational and cost perspective.

Not only would the revised route reduce disruption in Warwick during the construction period, it could also provide an additional benefit of upgrading Southern Downs Regional Council's reservoir.

Project timeline

The department is currently working collaboratively with Seqwater, Sunwater, Toowoomba Regional Council, and Southern Downs Regional Council to deliver the preparatory and investigative works, including detailed design for the pipeline.

This work, along with feedback gathered during this consultation period, will provide important information about the feasibility of the proposed pipeline and is anticipated to be completed in April 2022. A decision will then be made about whether or not to progress with the pipeline.

Operations

The department is committed to providing regional townships with a safe and reliable water supply during drought conditions.

Should a decision be made to proceed, the Queensland Government will work closely with Southern Downs Regional Council, Toowoomba Regional Council, and Seqwater to establish how the pipeline would be constructed and operated, including how it would be funded.

Ownership and operation of the proposed Toowoomba to Warwick Pipeline, should it proceed, will be considered as part of the any final decision.