

A pipeline connecting jobs, skills and water security for our region

By Darren Barlow, Chief Executive Officer, Gladstone Area Water Board

In Central Queensland, water security is more than an infrastructure challenge – it's the foundation for jobs, industry, and the future prosperity of our communities.

For decades, Gladstone has relied on one source of water – Awoonga Dam, and after multiple failed wet seasons the dam is (as of October 2025) at 43% capacity.

Gladstone Area Water Board (GAWB) has an allocation of 78 gigalitres per annum from Awoonga Dam, and every precious drop has been allocated to customers in our region.

In 2023, the Queensland Government announced a partial solution to our water supply risk – the Fitzroy to Gladstone Pipeline (FGP), a \$983 million raw water pipeline connecting water from the Lower Fitzroy River in Rockhampton, to GAWB's existing network in Gladstone.

At 117 kilometres long, the FGP will include an intake at Laurel Bank, a facility at Alton Downs to remove sediment and generate good quality raw water, and reservoirs at Aldoga. When complete, the pipeline will transport 30 gigalitres of raw water each year from the Fitzroy River to Gladstone, delivering significantly improved and much-needed water security to our region and our customers.

Our role at GAWB is to deliver safe and reliable bulk water services for our customers, which include major industries and Gladstone Regional Council. Our customers are the engine room of Queensland and quite simply, they need water to operate.

There's been a drive for new customers and increased demand from existing customers for water. The FGP won't deliver more water for demand – it's for water security. Yet we have a queue of potential and existing customers wanting more water, which is why we have published Queueing Guidelines. These guidelines set out a transparent process for managing customer requests.

A large portion of the water we supply goes to energy production, largely in the form of coal and LNG. Collectively, Gladstone's industries contribute around \$6 billion to the Queensland economy and support about 13,000 direct and indirect jobs in our region.

Commentary about the FGP being for hydrogen, renewable energy supply, or no longer required is simply incorrect. We need more water in Central Queensland, and the FGP is part of the water security solution.

Construction of the pipeline is almost complete - more than 400 jobs have been created during construction, with opportunities for trainees, and skilled workers across a range of trades and professions.

We're proud to have supported 21 trainees, as part of a focus on building local skills for the future.

Importantly, our commitment to investing in the region is not just words – it's backed by action. So far, through the FGP construction, we have spent more than \$150 million with businesses in Rockhampton and Gladstone. That's money flowing directly into local suppliers, sub-contractors, and service providers, strengthening the economic fabric of our communities. Furthermore, we have spent \$234 million with businesses in Queensland, and another \$206 million with Australian businesses located inter-state. In total that's more than \$590 million spent to date with Australian businesses.

We could have used overseas suppliers, but we didn't. It was important to contribute to economic growth by supporting local businesses.

The Fitzroy to Gladstone Pipeline is more than steel and concrete – it's a vital connection for jobs, skills and water security. It's an investment in the resilience of our region and a project we can all be proud of.

Gladstone Area Water Board (GAWB), as a Queensland Government Bulk Water Supply Authority, delivers safe and reliable water services which promote economic development and enhance the lifestyle of regional Queensland. GAWB owns and operates Awoonga Dam, along with a network of pipelines, water treatment plants and other distribution infrastructure. GAWB also owns and operates Aquaculture Gladstone, a fish hatchery and interpretive display at Lookout One at Lake Awoonga.

To ensure long-term water security for customers, the 117-kilometre Fitzroy to Gladstone Pipeline (FGP) is under development. When delivered, the FGP will become part of the GAWB network and provide enhanced water security and reliability for the region. For more information about GAWB and the FGP, please visit www.gawb.qld.gov.au

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