

1 December 2015

[story originally published 21 June 2013]

WANDONG RESIDENTS TO FINALLY GET NATURAL GAS LINE

More than 450 homes and businesses in Wandong-Heathcote Junction will soon have access to cheaper energy following yesterday's announcement to connect the town to a natural gas network.

Natural gas costs about one third the price of bottled gas.

Wandong-Heathcote Junction Community Group member Alan Knight said the town had finally been recognised, with residents left "pleasantly surprised".

"We've been fighting for this for years and we thought we'd never ever get it," Mr Knight said.

"We've had people move out of the area because you had bottled gas, and bottled gas was costing a fortune.

"They try to discourage you from using wood because of the smoke; it fills up the valley and some people have trouble breathing around the area.

"With natural gas, of course, the heater and that, you just come in and switch it on. You don't have to worry about carting wood around."

He said the news would put "new life" into the small town of about 1600.

Gas distribution company Envestra* has taken on the job and will see construction of about 1.3km of supply and trunk pipeline and more than 11km of reticulation pipeline connecting the town.

The network will be extended as the town grows, and residents should have access by the end of 2015.

A front-end engineering and design study, due to be finished in July, will detail project design and costs.

McEwen federal Liberal candidate Donna Petrovich said the project would "ensure that the people of Wandong have adequate heating and make sure that some of the most vulnerable people in our community are not left out in the cold".

McEwen federal Labor MP Rob Mitchell said the result was a credit to residents, but has questioned business access, a construction start time and the cost to consumers.

The gas line will be funded through the State Government's Regional Growth Fund.

A commencement date has not been set.

Source: <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/leader/north/wandong-residents-to-finally-get-natural-gas-line/story-fnglenug-1226666953201>

Originally published 21 June 2013.

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*Note: "Envestra" is the former name of "Australian Gas Networks Limited"; the Company changed names in October 2014.