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MEDIA RELEASE

History created at Tanunda as businesses and households connect to natural gas for first time

For the first time in its famed history, businesses and households in Tanunda in South Australia's internationally-renowned Barossa Valley are now able to connect to natural gas.

The milestone development is a significant boon to the region with more than 20 local business and 100 households jumping at the opportunity to have natural gas connected directly to their properties.

This will increase significantly over coming months as more local residents and business owners commit to getting connected.

Australian Gas Networks - one of the country's largest gas distribution companies - is behind the history-making expansion of its network after constructing a \$5.5 million supply main from its existing infrastructure at nearby Nuriootpa.

This includes the ongoing installation of about 24km of reticulation mains to make natural gas available to the majority of commercial and residential properties in the area.

"Our new supply infrastructure for Tanunda is great news for local businesses and households in the area," AGN's Chief Operating Officer, Mr Andrew Staniford, said today.

"For the first time, they can connect to natural gas running straight past their properties, saving them the more costly and cumbersome task of having to use bottled LPG," he said.

"Generally households choosing to connect to gas will not have to pay any up-front charges to AGN. We will provide, and fund the cost of, a service pipe and the meter in the customer's property.

"AGN is delighted with the response received from property owners keen to hook up to natural gas as soon as they can.

"We anticipate that interest will increase as more people in the region become aware that they can now connect to natural gas.

"Importantly, the new infrastructure will provide a major economic boost for the area as more and more businesses and homeowners access the many benefits of natural gas for the first time."

It is anticipated that over 2000 homes and businesses in the area will ultimately connect to natural gas.

The Tanunda project follows the completion of another significant commitment by AGN - a \$14 million dollar upgrade to the natural gas pipeline that supplies Mildura.

The majority of that work was at Angaston, where a new 600kW compressor was installed.

AGN is also behind another ground-breaking milestone currently underway in SA's famed McLaren Vale wine and tourism region where local businesses and households will also have the opportunity to connect to natural gas for the first time following the Company's construction of a new \$6 million gas supply main and reticulation.

Mr Staniford said a major marketing campaign has been underway in the Barossa Valley to alert potential new customers to the new and improved networks.

New customers are urged to take advantage of a range of AGN rebates of up to \$1500 to install natural gas appliances, as well as the 23% reduction in gas distribution charges in real terms, effective from 1 July 2016.

This will reduce the average energy bill of AGN's 425,000 residential and 10,000 small business customers by about \$144 and \$750 per annum respectively from 1 July 2016.

One of the first businesses in Tanunda to connect to natural gas was the Rex Barossa Aquatic and Fitness Centre.

Barossa Council Mayor, Mr Bob Sloane, said: "We anticipate the conversion to natural gas will deliver savings of \$125,000 per annum, which is a great outcome for both Council and the community."

Mr Staniford said: "The Tanunda project is one of the major improvement programs we are currently undertaking in South Australia, and is part of the continual improvement program we roll out across all the jurisdictions in which we operate," Mr Staniford said.

"It's a well-known fact that natural gas is a clean, safe, instant and cost effective energy source. We believe the availability of natural gas to property owners in the area will be a real economic growth opportunity for the region," he said.

"Our upgraded natural gas network provides a wonderful opportunity to offer these business and home owners the opportunity to connect to the network, and enjoy the many advantages of natural gas being supplied to their properties, while taking advantage of the great rebates available to them.

"Many people don't fully appreciate or understand the full benefits and uses of having natural gas connected to their homes or businesses.

"Its use is wide and varied - from the obvious and most common uses like continual hot water, instant heat for cooking and central heating to powering gas-fired air-conditioners and firing the outdoor/alfresco barbeque.

"Expanding our network into Tanunda means AGN is now ideally placed to target network growth and facilitate connections for new and existing customers."

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