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**ATTN: News Editor**

## **New era for Armidale's gas supply as Kleenheat puts outdated network to rest**

After a thorough review of Armidale's 110-year old Tempered Liquid Petroleum Gas (TLP) reticulation system, Kleenheat Gas will shut down the network and help customers convert to more up-to-date alternatives by winter.

Kleenheat Gas General Manager Graham Smith said the decision to shut down the outdated gas system had been a difficult one for the company and not taken lightly.

"TLP is fast becoming obsolete as newer and better energy alternatives take over," Mr Smith said.

"The numbers speak for themselves - when we took over the system nearly 15 years ago around 1500 customers were on the network, but that's now dropped by half as customers take up newer and better options on the market.

"A big reason why they're voluntarily switching to LPG or other energy alternatives is that TLP appliances stopped being manufactured 10 years ago and can't be replaced when they break down."

Mr Smith said the review had focused on the system's safety, efficiency, supply reliability and long-term economical and environmental viability.

"Apart from its continual decline through ageing, the pipeline itself is about 120 kilometres long and contains three different materials – cast iron, galvanised pipe and non-metallic pipe," he said.

"Over the last five years we've had on average at least one shut down a year involving all or part of the pipeline to fix leaks and do repairs, which is disruptive for customers and a costly exercise to maintain. As time goes on, we anticipate that situation will only get worse.

"It's not feasible to spend more money on upgrading the existing mains when the system itself is virtually obsolete – we had to seriously consider the system's long-term future and decide once and for all what to do about it for the sake of both our customers and the company.

"Closing the TLP network down is inevitable and we can't justify persisting with a system that's going to be redundant in a few years anyway as people are forced to convert to other options when their appliances expire."

As part of the review, all domestic and commercial premises currently being supplied TLP were assessed for their suitability to switch to LPG, proven to be one of the safest and most convenient gas supply options on the market today.

In most residential cases, LPG cylinders are recommended, with a standard installation needing two cylinders - one in service and the other on standby. Supply is easily switched from one cylinder to the other by a changeover valve, delivering a robust and continuous supply that doesn't rely on a larger network.

For commercial customers, it was found most would benefit from an LPG bulk vessel on their premises, with resupply made regularly by a delivery truck.

Kleenheat has begun the process of sending letters to Armidale customers with information about the shutdown and their options, including help to cover the cost of supply conversion and installation if the customer continues their supply with Kleenheat.

"Because we're shutting the system down, we want to make the conversion process as simple and convenient as possible," Mr Smith said.

"We've taken steps to minimise the impact for our customers and help them make the change by offering to cover the conversion and set-up costs if they keep their supply with us, waive the first year of their facility fee, and purchase new LPG domestic appliances from us at cost price."

Customers also have the option to ring Kleenheat on 132 180 to confidentially discuss financial or other arrangements to help them switch from TLP to LPG.

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