

TENNECO PIPELIN

vital to industry

The Tenneco pipeline, critical to the future supply of gas to SE Queensland's industrial belt, has had a troublesome birth.



A vacuum lift is used to lower pipe to the ground to avoid damage to

GRAHAM GARDINER REPORTS.

Fletcher Constructions and Spie-Capag have recommenced work on Tenneco Energy's \$220m pipeline linking the south-west Queensland gas fields with the existing Wallumbilla-Brisbane pipeline.

The contractors, who began construction of the 750km pipeline between Wallumbilla, near Roma, and Ballera in the State's south-west corner in January, ceased work on the project in late February following a feud between members of the Gungarri tribe and the Goolburri Aboriginal Corporation over traditional links

with land being traversed by the pipeline.

After a halt of several weeks Tenneco, as developer, owner and operator of the pipeline, decided to move construction approximately 108km away from the disputed territory.

A new camp was established for the 300-odd construction crew and a new work cycle began in the middle of last month.

Garry Cheatham, the Tenneco executive responsible for the work, says the contractors will return to the area later to complete the affected section.

He says the dispute centres on a disagreement between Aboriginal groups rather than

a failure by the company to protect sensitive sites.

Tenneco, in conjunction with the Queensland Government and the Goolburri Aboriginal Land Corporation, has in place a cultural management plan requiring it to employ four Aboriginal researchers to monitor sensitive sites along the pipeline route.

Despite the downtime, Cheatham says Tenneco is happy with the project's progress, which remains on schedule for completion by September and commissioning by October 1.

"We were three weeks or almost one construction cycle into the project when we resumed.

"In January we had a tremendous rainfall in Roma which broke five years of drought, and in February we had the Aboriginal protests. Because of the protests and the

have the work completed by October 1."

Cheatham says the "high-speed" construction method being applied on the project will enable the lost time to be recouped.

"Pipeline construction proceeds at a rate of 5.6km a 10-hour day and, with workers spread over 60 to 70km of land area at any given time, the construction cycle can be accelerated by seven to 10 days if need be."

Tenneco was selected by the Queensland Government in late 1994 as preferred developer for the pipeline, which will address concerns about declining production of natural gas in the Surat Basin and Denison Trough.

The fields have been the sole sources of supply for the east-coast markets but their reserves are finite and this year's production is expected to begin to decline, to be replaced from much larger natural gas fields in the Cooper-Eromanga basins of South-West Queensland.

completed to the middle of the month the pipeline extended 95km to Wallumbilla, where AGL's existing pipeline from the Surat Basin at Trough to Brisbane

Cheatham says the natural gas pipeline is a simple process, with each of the pipe 150km long sections being no more than 5

The construction is staggered to enable clearing and grading along the 25m easement to be completed at a pace that ensures pipeline viability in particular, are not

Cheatham says the line's right-of-way established according to government requirements, environmental protection, and the wishes of landowners and communities.

Once clearing and grading are done, a central ditch is carried out by trench digging to an average depth of 2m

