

Renmark Plaza - Greenfield Shopping Centre - \$37.3 million

Completed in November 2007 with a projected total cost of \$37.3 million, Renmark Plaza is the largest and most modern shopping centre within the Riverland region. Comprising of the first discount department store to the region with Big W, Woolworths relocated from nearby and 25 specialty stores.

Renmark is the oldest settlement along the Murray, dating from 1887, known as the 'fruitbowl of SA' with a busy economy based on wheat, wool, almonds, citrus, grapes and wine production. For years Renmark people have gone to do their shopping in Mildura or in the suburban shopping centres of Adelaide. The new shopping complex is expected to retain spending dollars in the town and also create up to 150 new jobs.

Smith Brothers Plumbing Construction won the Hydraulic Services tender as designed by Bestec with builder Hansen Yuncken and commenced on site early January 2007 with the official opening complete with fireworks on Saturday 10th November 2007. Also as part of the project, Trojan Fire subcontracted the inground and testing section of the Fire Scope of Works to Smith Brothers Plumbing.

The team consisted of Stuart Hallandal, Project Manager, Byron Brewin, Site Manager and up to ten plumbers and apprentices on-site. Stuart has developed a successful working relationship on many previous projects with Chris Bate, the Project Manager for Hansen Yuncken and Byron has extensive experience and expertise on rural and remote construction sites with a good rapport with local people.

Prior to commencing the job, Stuart and Byron did two walk-throughs of Woolworths stores to inspect the plumbing. As Stuart says "Woolworths are a specialist job with their own specific brief and unless you have done one before, it can be difficult." In Stuart's opinion, Byron achieved an excellent result.

For this project they took up vehicles, a site office, two equipment and materials containers, two 20 tonne excavators, a backhoe, bobcat and truck. The team consisted of plant operators, licensed plumbers and apprentices. Renmark is 3 hours drive from Adelaide. The job was set up to work five days per week, leaving site on a Friday afternoon and returning back on Sunday evening ready to commence early Monday morning.

Byron explained that with good organisation and co-ordination with other trades they were able to keep overtime to a minimum and hence keep costs down and enable employees to return to their families for the weekends. Other trades were working seven days a week or 20 hours per week more than our team. He says that each Thursday he would confer with the other trades with the option to work the weekend but it was never necessary.

Of particular interest in this project were the challenges of installing the on-site septic tanks discharging into the Council's common effluent drainage system. These days it is very rare to work with septic tanks except in the country and most of our plumbers never would have done so before. For this project, we installed three 20,000L septic tanks. As Stuart says, "I had never seen a hole as big as that before. In Adelaide, we normally don't dig that deep." The added difficulty was dealing with the water.

The tanks needed to be installed at 6 metres however it soon became apparent that with the close proximity of the River Murray, the water table was at 3 metres and water filled the excavation very quickly. Dewatering involved drilling down and inserting 70 spears at a depth of 8-9 metres connected to PVC pipes with a diesel pump to suck the water up and away from the excavation site. Once in place, three days was required before commencing digging again.

In addition, because of the depth of the excavated hole, the 20 tonne excavator couldn't get down deep enough from the ground surface so we had to dig another trench 1.5m down as a base for the excavator and then have another excavator behind to move the dirt away.

All in all, it was a successful project - completed on time, no Lost Time Injuries, minimum overtime and a work-life balance for employees.



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