TOWNSVILLE steel companies may not be allowed to build the duplicate Haughton pipeline, with a Melbourne firm raising concerns about the use of a design patent.

Townsville councillor Paul Jacob said the project to duplicate the existing pipeline from the Burdekin to Ross River Dam may have to be a joint venture between the region’s local businesses and Victoria’s Steel Mains. The council is confident the patent problem will not delay the pipeline’s planned 2019 finish date.
Cr Jacob said Steel Mains had a patent on aspects of the pipeline design, meaning a joint venture with Townsville businesses may be required.

“They would build it all here but it would be a joint venture,” he said.

“Whether it will all be manufactured here will be decided in coming weeks.”

It is understood Steel Mains has a patent over technology that could be used to connect the pipes and a long-life coating for their exterior.

The Townsville Ross River Dam is at 16.5 per cent.

“The patent for the connection is to reduce costs substantially,” Cr Jacob said.

“The coating on the outside is to give the pipe 100 years of operation.

“I don’t want it (construction) to linger on either, I want to get it under way. If we can get this under way very soon, I’m confident it can be completed by then (2019).

“The council isn’t getting involved in the process of Steel Mains and the local companies. They have world-leading technology, which is why they’re negotiating with steel makers locally.”

A steel industry source told the Bulletin Steel Mains representatives had visited Townsville a few weeks ago.

“They want to work locally because of the political will,” he said.
“They’re (Steel Mains) talking about bringing a plant to town to do the cement lining and painting and locals would supply them.”

A spokesman for Steel Mains said the company was interested in being involved in the Haughton project.

“We’re eagerly interested in finding out more as the asset owners release more information,” he said.

“There has to be a design for the pipeline.”