

Department for Environment and Heritage

Twentieth Century Heritage Survey  
Stage 1: Post Second World War (1946 -1959)



Overview History

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[assisted by Carol Cosgrove and Robyn Taylor]  
Adelaide 2003-4



Government  
of South Australia

Front Cover:

South Australians in the 1950s.

The children are (left to right): Anthonius (Tony), Maria, Anthonia (Toosjie) and Johanna (Joh) in the summer of 1954/55. The family migrated from Holland in 1953 and have moved from migrant camps at Bonegilla and Finsbury to an asbestos house rented from the South Australian Housing Trust. Their father Anthonius Dam has photographed the four children in their front yard at 23 East Avenue, Northfield, enjoying a cold Coca-Cola, still a rare American treat for any South Australian child.

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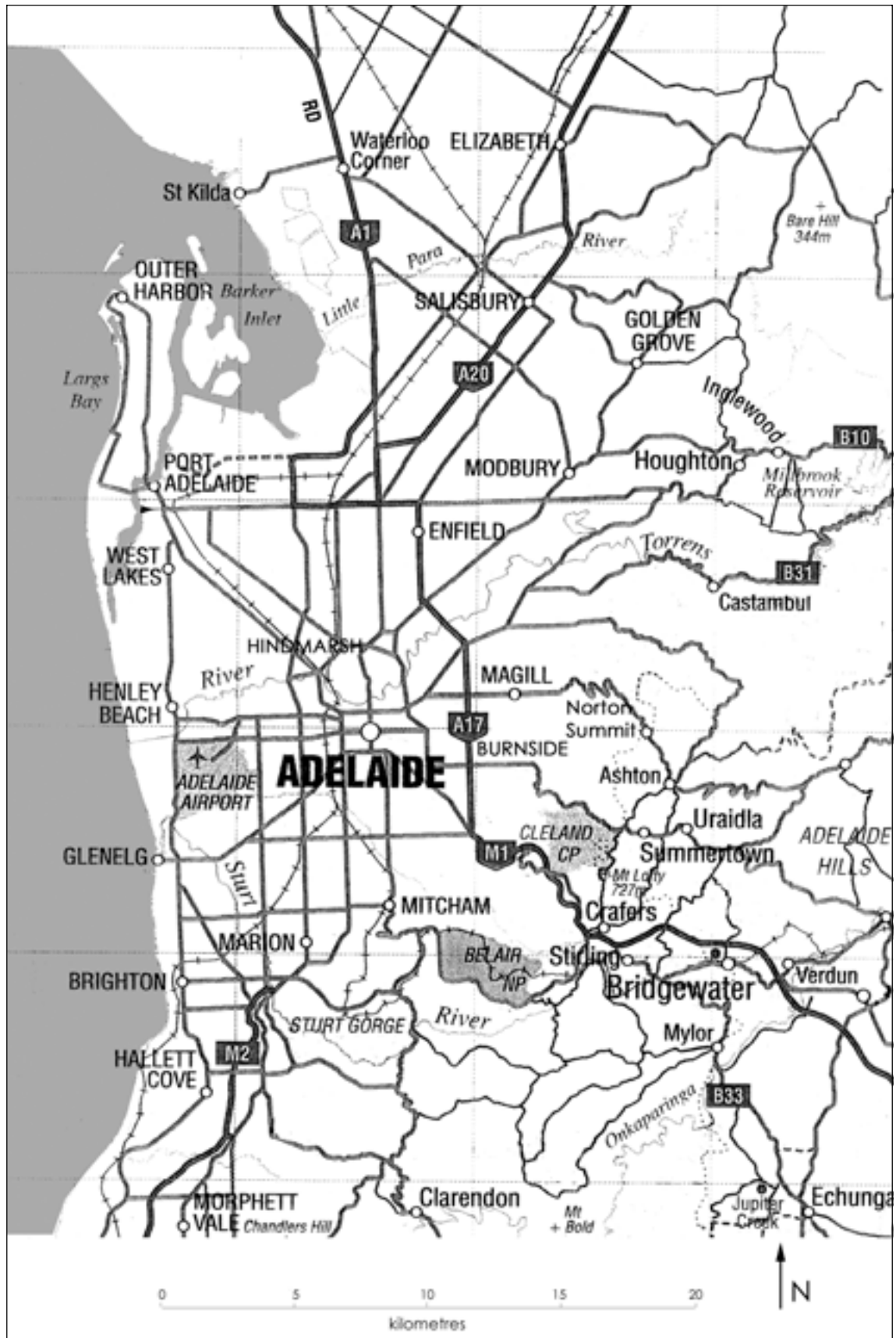
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South Australia showing the locations of places referred to, as well as Goyder's Line and the dog fence.



Adelaide Metropolitan area showing the areas referred to.

## Introduction

### *Aims*

The purposes of this report are as follows:

Carry out historical research establishing the principal events and themes that characterise the physical, cultural and social development of the period 1946 to 1959 and write an overview history which will be the basis for the [later] recommendations of the report.

### *Methodology*

Research was carried out on several fronts. We searched holdings at the National Library (Canberra), the State Library, State Records, Barr Smith Library, the library of the Heritage Branch, S Marsden's library, R Taylor's library, the Mitcham Local History Collection and local libraries. Robyn Taylor provided an overview of the architects and architectural history.

The period is well within living memory but distant enough for considerable historical research to have been done (although much is not yet published), and so for both reasons personal consultation was essential. We list organisations and individuals who were consulted in the Acknowledgements but the most valuable consultation was with participants at the History Trust's State History Conference at Renmark (23-25 May 2003). We also toured Renmark and nearby towns and took photographs for use in the study.

We searched the Register of the National Estate database for relevant listings and both the internet site of the Heritage Branch and its on-site collection, including surveys and reports. We prepared a chronology and assembled files of material on specific topics, including architecture, agriculture, soldier settlement and water. We carried out a 'Desktop' survey (reviewing heritage lists and regional surveys) of heritage places from the relevant period to help inform and direct the writing of the history.

The overview history is provided in Part 2. The first section (Context) sets the scene: SA in its geographical, national and historical context. It surveys events relevant to SA in the broader Australian context, as well as the State experience. Part 3 includes a Chronology of major events, Bibliography, Appendices and Index.

### *Themes*

We developed themes and topics for the overview history (1946-59) by integrating three approaches: adapting existing thematic frameworks; consulting with other historians and heritage staff; and responding to the historical evidence itself and to other published histories. The practice of setting heritage places in a framework of historical themes is well established in Australian and South Australian heritage studies. Such a framework is not hierarchical and there is deliberate overlapping as we are dealing with historical processes and people's lives rather than rigid categories. We also try to convey in this history a sense of big themes not set out separately, for example, the ramifications of war in this early postwar period, shortages, transitions, and the pervasive impact of state socialism.

The main theme headings (sections 2-8) are based on those set out in *South Australian State Historic Preservation Plan: Historical Guidelines* (Susan Marsden, Department for the Environment, 1980); and the *Australian Historic Themes* (Australian Heritage Commission, 2001. This is now the Department of the

Environment and Heritage). The South Australian State Historic Preservation Plan (1980) themes are: *Land and sea; People, social life and organisations; Politics and government; Work, economic production, service industries; and Notable events.*

The Australian Historic Themes (2001) are: *Tracing the Evolution of the Australian Environment; Peopling Australia; Developing local, regional and national economies; Building settlements, towns and cities; Working; Educating; Governing; Developing Australia's Cultural Life; Marking the phases of life.*

Other historians have adapted the Australian Historic Themes to the heritage of their own State and we have also considered them, in particular, the Queensland approach.<sup>1</sup> This, we think appropriately, divides the very large economic theme into three, although we have divided this differently, in keeping with South Australia's post war history.

We have also considered topics/themes suggested in the project brief, and discussed further with Heritage Branch staff. They include: 'austerity' and 'modernism'; Soldier settlement; immigration; suburban development (and the SA Housing Trust); building technology and construction techniques; industrial development; business and commerce, shopping centres & department stores; space exploration and research; atomic energy & testing; American influence (television); the role of women in society; and the impact of the car (highways, motels & services stations).

These are the themes developed as the major headings for this history:

1. The South Australian environment
2. Peopling South Australia
3. Economic production and working life
4. Developing South Australia's service industries
5. Building settlements, towns and cities
6. Politics and government
7. The social and cultural life of South Australians.

## Recommendations

We recommend that:

- this report is published, both in hard copy and in PDF form on the Internet
- key heritage places identified in this report are considered for formal assessment rather than delay until other histories or surveys are done
- future thematic studies comprise both the history and survey (as originally intended)
- future historical studies of this kind cover a longer span of time, perhaps 20 years (therefore, 1960-80 and 1980-2000)

## Acknowledgements

We wish to thank the following people and organisations:

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Dr Peter Bell

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<sup>1</sup> Thom Blake, *Historic Themes in Queensland. Understanding Queensland's Cultural Heritage*, Queensland Heritage Trails Network, Arts Queensland, Brisbane, 2001.



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Dr Christine Garnaut (University of South Australia)

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Ms Maggy Ragless (Community Historian, City of Mitcham)

Dr Jenny Stock

## Abbreviations

ADB	Australian Dictionary of Biography
BCOF	British Commonwealth Occupation Force
BHP	Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited
DEH	Department for the Environment and Heritage, Canberra
E&WS	Engineering and Water Supply
ETSA	Electricity Trust of South Australia
GMH	General Motors–Holden’s Limited
LCL	Liberal and Country League
HSSA	Historical Society of South Australia
LDE	Land Development Executive
MIT	Municipal Tramways Trust
MUP	Melbourne University Press
NCW	National Council of Women
OUP	Oxford University Press
POW	Prisoner(s) Of War
RAIA	Royal Australian Institute of Architects
RNE	Register of the National Estate
RSL	Returned Services League
SAHT	South Australia Housing Trust
SAPD	South Australian Parliamentary Debates
SAPP	South Australian Parliamentary Papers
SHR	State Heritage Register
UAM	United Aborigines Mission
WRE	Weapons Research Establishment
YMCA	Young Men’s Christian Association

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## Context

We were part of the noisy and exuberant celebrations for VE Day then for VP Day. Dad was discharged in 1946 and we packed ourselves into our ancient Hudson car and drove back to South Australia and all the exciting things we expected to find there.

One of the first things he found when he walked into his first appointment as Senior Master was that a number of those who had... *not* gone to war, deeply resented the return of those who had ... seniority which had continued to accrue during their time in the Forces. The next was that there was nowhere to live. We lived with Grandparents for a month or two ... Glossop High was a brand new school then, in the middle of nowhere in deference to inter-town rivalry. There were no teachers' houses ... we rented a pickers' hut on a fruit block at Monash. Adobe walls, bag ceilings, dirt floors, orange trees and sultana vines to the back door. Spiders, snakes, mice, rats and a mother who was pregnant again and miserably sick ... The schools were terribly crowded too, with very large classes: 45+ for my early High School years. Then we were blessed with the still-extant prefabs.<sup>2</sup>

South Australians shared similar circumstances after World War II (1939–45). Many remember those years and their recollections link and enliven this history. The most significant elements in the history of South Australia 1946–59 are: the impact of the war and other external influences – notably, the expansion of Commonwealth power and technological advances – and the state's own circumstances, in particular, its geography and Sir Thomas Playford's role as premier (1938–65). This section provides historical background, followed by a discussion of the geography (*Section 2*). The other elements are discussed in subsequent theme sections. In this account there are many examples of 'lasts' as well as 'firsts'. This was a momentous transitional period when long-established practices, technologies and attitudes were changed radically or were abruptly replaced.

South Australia was occupied as a British colony in 1836. Adelaide was the capital city and beach-head for occupation of a vast region. European settlers progressively displaced most of the Aboriginal peoples whose ownership dated as far back as 50,000 years. In 1901 the colony became one of six states in the new Commonwealth of Australia. Responsibility for most government services remained under state control but Commonwealth powers were gradually extended, especially during the two world wars (1914–18 and 1939–45).

Wool, wheat, wine and minerals were the state's most valuable commodities but in the 1930s drought and depression forced many settlers off the land. The Liberal and Country League (LCL) state government was persuaded to shift focus from promoting primary to secondary industry, a change devised by industrialists and MPs (Sir) Frank Perry and Sir Edward Holden and Auditor-General JW (William) Wainwright. They advised on strategies to support manufacturing – for instance, by forming the South Australian Housing Trust (1936) and the Industries Assistance Corporation (1937).<sup>3</sup> These policies were fully adopted from 1938 by the new LCL premier Thomas Playford and gained impetus from war munitions work. The war also brought home the state's limitations in this project of government-supported industrialisation. Water,

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<sup>2</sup> Judy Murdoch, *Recollections of South Australia 1946–59* (emailed to S Marsden, 2 Dec 2003). VE Day (Victory in Europe) was officially celebrated on 7 May and VP Day (Victory in the Pacific) on 15 August 1945.

<sup>3</sup> D Coleman and J Miles, *A richness of people*, pp. 95–96.

power, roads and worker housing were four key areas in which state projects were started during the war and found their fullest expression in the early postwar years.

'Presiding over the transformation of a rural economy into a predominantly industrial economy was genial and financially shrewd Thomas Playford.'<sup>4</sup> Playford (knighted in 1957) had an immense impact by shaping and implementing the industrialisation strategy and using 'his political skills and guile, as well as the resources of the state administration, to ensure that it succeeded'.<sup>5</sup> The Playford era represents the full (and perhaps final) flowering of state socialism. The term 'state socialism' has been applied to the tradition of colonial/state governments funding expensive infrastructure (such as railways) as the basis for private investment. Playford promoted the customary objective of state socialism: to increase the rural population; while also applying the principle to develop urban infrastructure, using state resources 'to make investments with scale economies to solve urban problems and thus encourage private investment'.<sup>6</sup>

Historians debate the extent of Playford's achievement relative to that of other premiers but agree that his skill in negotiating with Commonwealth ministers and industrialists enabled him to implement the industrialisation policy. Development also drew heavily upon similar Commonwealth policies. Both world wars had expanded Commonwealth powers relative to the states and increased its impact on Australian life. (*For state and national government see also Section 7.*)

A recent history of the war's aftermath suggests that in Europe 'the decade 1945–56 might usefully be understood now as "postwar" in the sense that the unresolved business of the war itself – with respect to economic damage, social disruption, political score settling, and so on – was still the dominant feature'.<sup>7</sup> This postwar decade had that precise meaning also in South Australia. There were similarities, such as demobilisation, repatriation of prisoners-of-war, and persisting wartime controls and shortages, but many issues were different to those faced by Europe (and Asia) because southern Australia had been distant from attack.

As a direct consequence of the dislocation and privations of war, Australia undertook to resettle European refugees and signed migration agreements with the UK, Italy, Germany, Greece and Austria, as well as a general assisted scheme. The postwar period was also characterised by austerity, although not to the same extent as in Europe. In South Australia, wartime rationing and regulations reinforced habits of caution and thrift dating from the depression and earlier. These habits and the impact of continuing restrictions and shortages are discernible in the design and materials of buildings and in other material culture.

South Australia remained a militarised society, even as demobilisation and repatriation of POWs proceeded. '[Bruce] spent a year ... with the [British Commonwealth] occupation forces... He loved Japan and had a great time there

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<sup>4</sup> T Griffin & M McCaskill, eds, *Atlas of South Australia*, South Australian Government Printing Division, Adelaide, 1986, p.28. Playford was not officially called 'Premier', but was Treasurer (the portfolio customarily taken by the chief minister). The office of Premier did not officially exist until 1965.

<sup>5</sup> D Rich, 'Tom's vision? Playford and industrialisation', B O'Neil, J Raftery, K Round, eds, *Playford's South Australia: essays on the history of South Australia 1933–1968*, Association of Professional Historians Inc, Adelaide, 1996, p. 111.

<sup>6</sup> L Frost & T Dingle, 'Infrastructure, technology and change: a historical perspective', P Troy, ed, *Technological change and the city*, Federation Press, NSW 1995, pp. 29–30.

<sup>7</sup> I Deak, JT Gross, T Judt, eds, *The politics of retribution in Europe. World War II and its aftermath*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2000, p ix.

... I think the air force was the highlight of his life, the way he spoke about that.'<sup>8</sup> Most young adults had been engaged in some form of war work, and after 1945 Australians served also in Japan and in three wars against communism as part of a global Cold War. Fears aroused by the war, especially atomic Armageddon and communism were pervasive. At the same time, the victory in 1945 and the lifting of many controls released huge optimism and energy.

Ex-servicemen were vocal and visible and had first priority in health services, housing, employment and education. Much effort was spent rewarding them with homes, nurtured by at-home wives. Wartime munitions works, airfields, barracks and Nissen huts were widely used, sometimes relocated. War practices coloured major postwar activities: mobilisation of migrant labour, mass-housing, and the education of baby boomers. Even the new consumer goods – cars, plastic products such as Tupperware, and electrical goods – were products of wartime engineering innovation and expansion.

South Australia's isolation had helped preserve it from attack during the Pacific war and encouraged the building of munitions works and army bases. These features now attracted international attention as they were deemed suitable for testing weapons of mass destruction developed during the war. Fervour for nuclear arms testing was aroused when the USA exploded the world's first atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, terminating the war with Japan. South Australia shared worldwide anxieties about the threat of new wars with Communist Russia and China, as the Western powers entered a long period of 'Cold War' with the Communist Bloc.

'The war also brought impacts of a different kind, with the United States displacing Britain as the prevailing cultural and economic influence.'<sup>9</sup> The most obvious American influence was in products and entertainment, but there were more fundamental effects. Popular culture had long been influenced by American cultural exports but those influences were strengthened by direct contact with servicemen during the war and expanding American investment afterwards. Australians took up things American, drinking Coca Cola, substituting American terms ('barbecue') for older Australianisms ('chop picnic'), and buying American-designed products from American-owned companies, including 'Australia's own car', the Holden.

### ***The South Australian environment***

This is a society which has had to continually reinvent itself in order to prosper in an arid environment – modestly-endowed and physically isolated.<sup>10</sup>

South Australia occupies a huge area, 984,377 square kilometres or one eighth of the continent. Average annual rainfall is 528 mm but 80% of the state receives less than 250 mm. 'This vast and arid environment is the central fact of South Australia's history.'<sup>11</sup> The Murray is the only large river, and as it originates outside South

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<sup>8</sup> Ann Marsden, interviewed by A & S Marsden, 6 September 1997 (Transcripts S Marsden collection).

<sup>9</sup> F Stropin & S Marsden, eds, *Twentieth century heritage: marking the recent past*, Australian Heritage Information Network, Adelaide 2001, p. 18.

<sup>10</sup> S Marsden, 'South Australia', in J Hirst, S McIntyre & G Davison, eds, *The Oxford companion to Australian history*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1998, p 599.

<sup>11</sup> Marsden, 'South Australia', pp 598–9.

Australia, even that is shared with the two most populous states of New South Wales and Victoria – as long running disputes over the allocation of Murray waters indicate.

The state is also geographically isolated. Although it shares borders with the other four mainland states and the Northern Territory, it is separated from them by long distances, sparsely inhabited, and the nearest land mass across the ocean to the south is Antarctica. When Rupert Murdoch left Melbourne for Adelaide in 1953 to take up his newspaper inheritance, his mother announced that it was 'like going into the wilderness'.<sup>12</sup>

These geographical realities shaped much of South Australia's history. They continued to do so in the 1940s and 1950s but the most ambitious attempts were made to surmount them by economic and technological means. In the last years of the war (1944–45), most of South Australia suffered severe drought and the experience hastened amalgamation of farms, the introduction of mixed farming practice and the reticulation of water supplies. Ironically, postwar pastoralism and agriculture also benefited from an unusually long period without serious drought.<sup>13</sup>

'The scarcity of water has made it necessary to develop resources that would be considered marginal in better-endowed regions; economic life in South Australia has depended to an unusually high degree on water transported over long distances in pipelines...'.<sup>14</sup> Limited water constrained urban and industrial development as well as agriculture, hence Playford's focus on building dams and pipelines. As most local water supplies were developed, attention turned in the 1940s to tapping the River Murray. Distances were large but construction was helped by the state's low relief. Commonwealth-funded construction of Goolwa barrages at the River mouth made it possible for the state's Engineering & Water Supply Department to supply Adelaide and the emerging industrial towns with water piped from the river.<sup>15</sup>

These developmental projects contributed much to the 'Playford legend' but subsequent events demonstrated the enduring limits set by the state's geographical constraints and the long-term social and environmental costs of the postwar policies and projects that addressed them.

The state was spared serious drought but suffered other natural catastrophes: storm, earthquake, bushfire and flood. In 1948 a severe storm partly destroyed the Glenelg and Brighton jetties. On 3 January 1954 with 'a roaring like a train', an earthquake struck Adelaide, frightening people out of bed as their homes shuddered. An infant Susan Marsden slept while chunks of ceiling fell onto the top of her 'rabbit hutch' cot. The epicentre was close to the Eden Fault in the southern suburbs of Darlington and Seacliff. The moderate earthquake measured 5.4 on the Richter scale and caused £4.5 million in claims damage but no deaths.<sup>16</sup> In 1955, 'Black Sunday' bushfires nearly killed the Governor, Sir Robert George and his family as their summer residence at Marble Hill was burnt.

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<sup>12</sup> W Shawcross, *Rupert Murdoch: ringmaster of the information circus*, Random House, Sydney, p 83.

<sup>13</sup> There was no serious drought until 1959 and its worst effects were concentrated in the south east, and there wasn't another serious drought until 1982. Vamplew et al, *South Australian Yearbook* No. 21: 1986, p. 79.

<sup>14</sup> Griffin & McCaskill, p. 60.

<sup>15</sup> Griffin & McCaskill, p. 60.

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Wilson, pers. comm., 19 Nov 2003 (quotation); Griffin & McCaskill, p. 67; Australian earthquakes, University of WA, nd, [www.seismicity.segs.uwa.edu.au/seismicity\\_in\\_australia](http://www.seismicity.segs.uwa.edu.au/seismicity_in_australia)

In 1956 the worst flood in Australia's recorded history swept down the River Murray, breaching levees and peaking at 19.5 metres. The 'Great Flood' washed through Renmark on 24 August, totally flooding the town except for the hospital and homes on high ground. Thousands of sightseers came to watch. 'The battles with sandbags, the drowned streets and pastures, the sheer scale of the flood, remains the single most vivid event in the Riverland's history, recalled today by its residents and even the most venerable of its buildings...bear water marks which testify to the event.'<sup>17</sup>

### **Peopling South Australia**

I arrived in South Australia as an immigrant from Europe in November 1949 and spent almost seven years there... In spite of the substantial inflow of immigrants there was an acute shortage of people to do all the work that was available. Living standards were improving, not spectacularly but steadily, as they were throughout Australia. To someone like myself, the contrast with the war-torn Europe I had left behind could not have been greater.<sup>18</sup>

### **Migration**

This was the most sustained period of population growth in the state's history and its composition and distribution were also transformed.<sup>19</sup> These events need emphasising as South Australia's growth rate declined from the 1960s and is now the slowest of all mainland states.<sup>20</sup> The historically high rates of the 1940s–60s underline the heritage significance of housing and facilities built to entice and accommodate migrants and young Australian families. The population had reached 500,000 in 1921 but was stalled by depression and war, and was around 600,000 by 1945. Small pre-war gains made the postwar increase seem dramatic. The 750,000 mark was reached in 1952 and one million by 1963.<sup>21</sup> The population grew at a more rapid rate than that of the rest of Australia in 1941–70, fuelled by prosperity, high birth-rates and immigration.<sup>22</sup> The birth-rate rose from 14 per 1,000 in 1935 to 25 in 1947 and did not fall below the Australian average until 1955.<sup>23</sup>

Table 1: South Australian population at censuses 1933–61\*

	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Annual average increase</b>
<b>1933</b>	290,962	289,987	580,949	7,149 (1.44%)
<b>1947</b>	320,031	326,042	646,073	4,652 (0.80%)
<b>1954</b>	403,903	393,191	797,094	21,574 (3.34%)
<b>1961</b>	490,225	479,115	969,340	24,607 (3.09%)

\* Full-blood Aborigines were excluded prior to the 1966 census  
Source: *South Australian Year Book No. 21: 1986*, ABS, Adelaide, p. 193.

<sup>17</sup> S Marsden, in *Heritage of the River Murray*, p. 69 (quotation); Griffin & McCaskill, p. 67.

<sup>18</sup> Sir Arvi Parbo, Foreword, O'Neil et al, 1996, p xi.

<sup>19</sup> G Hugo, 'Playford's people', O'Neil et al, *Playford's South Australia*, p. 45.

<sup>20</sup> The rate of population increase was slower in South Australia than the overall Australian rate from 1881–1940 but the following 20 years brought an above-average growth rate which again dropped below the Australian rate after 1966. *South Australian Year Book No 14: 1979*, ABS, Adelaide, 1979, p. 118.

<sup>21</sup> W Vamplew, 'South Australians 1836–1986, a statistical sketch', *South Australian Year Book No. 21: 1986*, p 193. The Australian population passed 10 million in 1959.

<sup>22</sup> E Kwan, *Living in South Australia: a social history*, SA Govt Printer, 1987, p. 104. The rate of increase in South Australia was greater than that for Australia as a whole only in the period 1941–70, with the greatest difference (and highest rates) in 1951–60: 28% for South Australia compared to 22% (Kwan, table, p 105).

<sup>23</sup> AC Hitchcox, 'Education in South Australia', in RJ Best, *Introducing South Australia*, ANZAAS, Adelaide 1958, p. 333.

Australia and the UK signed a new migration agreement in 1946. The scheme, under which British could emigrate free or with assisted passages, came into operation in 1947. By 1956 more than a quarter of a million had arrived.<sup>24</sup> Over 4,000 unaccompanied children and youths were included, and their treatment was to cause controversy later. Migration broadened South Australia's ethnic diversity but also made it more British, moving quickly from having 5.6% of its people born in the UK or Ireland in 1947 to 11.2% by 1966.<sup>25</sup> The British remained the largest single group of migrants (45% in 1947–80), with 41% migrating from continental Europe.<sup>26</sup> In 1958 the South Australian Housing Trust opened its own office in London to seek British migrants as house purchasers in the new town of Elizabeth.

Under the Mass Resettlement Scheme for Displaced Persons, more than 170,000 European refugees came to Australia in 1947–53. 'DPs' were obliged to enter into a work contract with the Commonwealth for two years as unskilled labourers and domestics. The first 907 DPs (438 Poles) arrived in South Australia in May 1949 and were taken to an immigrant holding centre in converted army huts at Woodside.<sup>27</sup> Most European migrants initially came from Eastern Europe and many fled Soviet Russia. Greater numbers came from southern and northern Europe in 1951–61. The agreement on Maltese migration, the first from the Mediterranean, was ratified in 1948. Large-scale migration from Italy began after an agreement in 1951, followed by a 1952 arrangement with Greece.

The immigration program's demographic target was broadly achieved in Australia (one per cent increase per year plus one per cent through natural increase) but migrants did not fill the 'empty continent' as they flooded into the cities. The program sought labour for manufacturing industry and most was located in the cities. Migrants were also drawn to metropolitan building and service trades and by established urban ethnic communities. Melbourne had the biggest intake, followed by Sydney, Adelaide and Perth. During peak migration (1947–66), 59% of total growth in Melbourne was due to overseas immigration, followed by Adelaide (57%) then Sydney (55%). The direct impact of immigration on Adelaide was very much less after the 1960s.<sup>28</sup>

Population changes in South Australia also included urbanisation, proletarianisation, and changes in family structure, women's role, and education levels. As Table 1 illustrates, the population also became more masculine. The change reflected men's return from job seeking and war service and also the emphasis on migrants suitable for labouring work, as Australia's migration officers selected more men than women. Source countries contributed to the gender imbalance. Despite representations from Australia, the Greek government maintained an official policy prohibiting unmarried women from emigrating until 1961.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Yearbook of the Commonwealth of Australia*, no. 43, 1957, pp. 577–80.

<sup>25</sup> BL Howarth, 'Post-war settlement patterns of the British and Irish', J Jupp, gen ed, *The Australian people. An encyclopedia of the nation, its people and their origins*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney 1988, p. 425 (including calculations from Table 2).

<sup>26</sup> RV Jackson, *Population history of Australia*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne, 1988, p. 30.

<sup>27</sup> Kwan, p 107 (caption).

<sup>28</sup> I Burnley, P Murphy & B Fagan, *Immigration and Australian cities*, Federation Press, NSW, 1997, pp. 13–15, 17, 33.

<sup>29</sup> AM Tamis, *An illustrated history of the Greeks in Australia*, La Trobe University, Vic, 1997, p. 85.

## Aborigines: tradition and displacement

If ... most of the rockets were to be fired a distance of three to four hundred miles ... all of that range would land in the aboriginal reserve among the natives. I refuse to stand aside to see them and their country offered in sacrifice to the moloch of militarism in its ghoulish preparation for another war.<sup>30</sup>

Aboriginal South Australians were treated as invisible or expendable, most notoriously in the north-west when it was 'cleared' for use as a rocket and bomb-testing site. 'Little mention was made about the effects the bomb tests might have on the Indigenous Australian inhabitants of the Maralinga area, a community that had experienced little contact with white Australia.'<sup>31</sup> They were moved away from their own lands by a native patrol officer but many were afflicted by radioactive fallout. When British scientist Scott Russell (in charge of the atomic program) was queried on the fate of the Aborigines at Maralinga, he responded that they were a dying race, and therefore dispensable.<sup>32</sup>

Woomera and Maralinga also prevented Aborigines from travelling across their own country and promoted their movement east and south. Pastoralism benefited from the same changes as well as from booming prices and government support and employed mainly Aboriginal workers. Until 1950 the majority of the population in the state's far north and west was Aboriginal. Many were also seasonal workers in mining and railway towns such as Coober Pedy and Cook and a fringe camp culture emerged in this period which helped to change Aboriginal consciousness between 1950 and the 1970s.<sup>33</sup>

Most Aboriginal families lived in conditions like those recalled by Bruce Marsden:

Shabby accommodation at Maria Creek like they used to live by the Torrens here. I wouldn't call them houses; they were home-made dumps. Some of them used flattened out kerosene tins and wood from packing cases and any tarpaulin they could get hold of. Lean-tos and humpies... Nobody took much notice of them ... There was no racial tension. I don't say that was a credit to Kingston, I think it was just they kept so quiet and out of trouble.<sup>34</sup>

An Aboriginal view of the hardships and the pleasures of those times is famously depicted by the artist Ian Abdulla. A Ngarrindjeri man born at Swan Reach Mission in 1947, Abdulla illustrates his 1950s childhood on the River Murray, giving each naïve painting a written story.<sup>35</sup> Some Aborigines lived in traditional communities in the far north or west. Most were kept out of sight on reserves and missions. The main reserves were Point McLeay and Point Pearce. New church missions had been established during a second wave of activity dating from the 1920s. The United Aborigines Mission (UAM) opened its first mission at Oodnadatta in 1924 and at Swan Reach in 1925. This was moved to Gerard in 1945, used as an Italian POW Woodcutters Camp

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<sup>30</sup> Charles Duguid, letter to the editor, *Advertiser*, 7 August 1946.

<sup>31</sup> R Cross, *Fallout: Hedley Marston and the British bomb tests in Australia*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2001, p. 32; McLelland et al, *Royal Commission into British Nuclear tests in Australia*, 1985, Vol. 1, pp. 308–9. See C Garnaut (HSSA Journal No. 30), p. 10, for attitudes towards Aborigines in the establishment of the Woomera Rocket range.

<sup>32</sup> Cross, p. 32. Their land was not restored to the Aboriginal owners until 1983.

<sup>33</sup> NLA MCG 5617, G Briscoe, 'A social history of the northern central region of South Australia', 1950 to 1979, MA thesis, ANU, Canberra 1991, pp. 1–72.

<sup>34</sup> Bruce Marsden, interviewed by A Marsden & S Marsden, 5 September 1992, transcript, p. 41 (S Marsden collection).

<sup>35</sup> See also I Abdulla, *As I grew older, the life and times of a Nunga growing up along the River Murray*, Omnibus Books, Adelaide, 1993.



during the war, and buildings were relocated from Loveday Internment Camp (the government took over the mission in 1961). Other missions were at Nepabunna (1930), Ernabella (1937) and Yalata (1952), the last established in South Australia.<sup>36</sup>

As in so much postwar history, this was a period of transition, exhibiting continuities with old practices as well as significant changes. Traditional tribal practices survived in outback regions such as Oodnadatta. Traditional 'colonial' practices were also maintained. For example, rations were distributed until 1964 when Aborigines became eligible for the pensions available to other Australians. This was also the last phase of total control and segregation. Aboriginal life was strictly controlled by the state government through the Aborigines Protection Board (replacing the Chief Protector in 1939).

The 1939 Act made the South Australian Government 'guardian' of all Aboriginal children, cementing the Board's policy of removing many of them. 'With this ever-present level of intrusion, the numbers of children removed from their families as "neglected" or "destitute" increased.'<sup>37</sup> The 'stolen generation' is the heritage of that policy and the institutions that housed them are their heritage places.<sup>38</sup> Most important was Colebrook Home, established by the UAM in 1927 at Oodnadatta (later at Quorn), and managed by Matron Ruby Hyde until 1952. The Home was moved in 1944 to 'Carinya' in Eden Hills near Adelaide. Colebrook housed as many as 50 children and more than 30 even after the Sisters retired in 1952. 'Many more children were placed in private homes and other institutions such as the Mount Barker Boys' Home, where several of them had some terrible experiences.' These institutions represent achievement as well as loss because some children later became Aboriginal leaders, most notably, Lowitja O'Donoghue. Colebrook Reserve and sculpture commemorate the 350 children who lived there from 1943–72.<sup>39</sup>

Table 2: Aboriginal Population in South Australia, select dates, 1788–1981

Year	Minimum population (est.)	Year	Minimum population (est.)
1788	15,000	1933	4,699
1836	10,000–14,000	1947	5,600
1861	9,000	1954	6,300
1881	6,346	1961	6,284
1901	4,888	1971	8,249
1921	4,598	1981	9,830

Source: South Australian Yearbook No. 21: 1986, p. 6

In the meantime, the work of anthropologists such as Charles Percy Mountford brought Aboriginal art and mythology to national and international audiences.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> F Gale, *Urban Aborigines*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1972, p 46; J Dallwitz & S Marsden (Heritage Investigations), *Heritage of the River Murray*, DEP, Adelaide 1985, p. 68.

<sup>37</sup> A Wilson, 'Aboriginal family history and State Records', paper presented at 12<sup>th</sup> State History Conference, Renmark, May 2003; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing them Home* report, 8 South Australia, 1997, [www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/stolen/stolen14.html#Heading54](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/stolen/stolen14.html#Heading54)

<sup>38</sup> The UAM moved Colebrook Home from Oodnadatta to Adelaide in 1944 where it remained until closed in 1981. From 1954 the Aborigines' Protection Board began to place the children in non-Aboriginal foster homes in preference to such institutions. The Board's guardianship of all Aboriginal children was not repealed until the Aboriginal Affairs Act 1962. (*Bringing them Home* report.)

<sup>39</sup> N Klaassen, *Colebrook Home*, Flinders Ranges Research, Adelaide 2003, [www.southaustralianhistory.com.au/colebrook.htm](http://www.southaustralianhistory.com.au/colebrook.htm) Colebrook Home was taken over by government and closed in 1972.

<sup>40</sup> P Jones, 'Charles Percy Mountford', J Ritchie, gen ed, *ADB*, vol 15, MUP Carlton 2000, pp. 431–33.

Aboriginal people, long invisible to the dominant society, began to regain some visibility. The main causes of change were demographic and policy-driven. War service and the return of Aboriginal ex-servicemen started the move from stations and missions to towns. The population also began to rise from the low point of the interwar years. Governments replaced 'protection' by segregation with 'assimilation'. A conference of Commonwealth and state ministers responsible for Aboriginal affairs in 1951 articulated the new assimilation policy and moved towards granting citizenship rights, including access to health, education and social service benefits. There was, however, little progress in Aboriginal health through the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>41</sup>

The Aborigines Protection Board did not formally adopt assimilation until 1951 but practised a policy of dispersal aiming at assimilation from the 1940s, moving people away from reserves. Between 1953 and 1958 the Board had 28 South Australian Housing Trust rental houses built in country towns for 'specially selected part-aboriginal couples' from missions. Dispersal could bring high social costs as people faced a financial struggle, isolation and discrimination. Their lives were still controlled by the Board, whether they were 'exempt' or 'non-exempt'.

To further promote assimilation, state schools were opened to Aboriginal students: Colebrook children attended Blackwood's schools for the first time in 1953. The Education Department also accepted responsibility for educating the children in missions, camps and reserves. The change in policy was highlighted by a nationally-reported incident at Oodnadatta in February 1956 when white residents refused to allow Aboriginal children to attend the state school.<sup>42</sup>

The Stuart Affair in 1959 caused even greater controversy and threw light on Aboriginal life on the margins; and on the roles of newspapers, ministers and the judiciary. The public furore also represented a turning point in Playford's success as premier.<sup>43</sup> Rupert 'Max' Stuart was found guilty of the murder of a white girl at Ceduna in 1958, and was sentenced to hang in 1959. Stuart was an Aranda man but was labelled 'part-aboriginal'. He was, like many Aborigines, leading a difficult life as a casual labourer far from his own country. Most Aboriginal squatters near Ceduna were from the Lutheran mission at Koonibba, 25 miles away. 'Like other missions and government stations, Koonibba offered its residents a roof and some rations, but little work.'<sup>44</sup>

Stuart was treated by the Australian judicial system with a disgust that still shames and, after 15 years in jail, he rose up to become a leader of Central Australia's Aborigines... More than this, the case marked the beginning of the end of the death penalty in Australia and set a new high tide mark for campaigning journalism.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> C Raynes, 'Ooldea, Boxing Day, 1941', pt 3, *RecordsArchives* (SRSA newsletter), 24, Mar 2003, p6.

<sup>42</sup> J Dallwitz & D Fazio, *White to black: Oodnadatta School 1892–1992*, Oodnadatta Aboriginal School, Adelaide 1992, pp 51–52.

<sup>43</sup> Many historians make this point. For example, S Cockburn, *Playford: benevolent despot*, Axiom Publishing, Kent Town, 1991 (Chapters 20–23) describes the events which shook the Playford regime, beginning with the Stuart case in 1958–9 and culminating in defeat in 1965.

<sup>44</sup> KS Inglis, *The Stuart Case*, Black Inc, Melbourne, 2002, p. 5.

<sup>45</sup> B Lagan, 'Black and white truth', *Bulletin*, vol. 120, no. 47, [bulletin.ninemsn.com.au/bulletin/EdDesk.nsf/0/916eac2020dbe9b7ca256c69001b4544?OpenDocument](http://bulletin.ninemsn.com.au/bulletin/EdDesk.nsf/0/916eac2020dbe9b7ca256c69001b4544?OpenDocument)

Stuart was convicted on a confession possibly concocted by the police. His court appeals failed but public pressure, led by Rohan Rivett, editor-in-chief of Rupert Murdoch's paper the *News*, forced the government to appoint an inquiry. Murdoch was personally involved, using the case to attack the Playford Government and the Adelaide 'establishment', which he disliked; and he also opposed the death penalty. Stuart's death sentence was commuted and he was imprisoned instead. When Stuart went to gaol, a vengeful government charged Rivett and News Ltd with libel but the charges were dismissed or withdrawn in 1960.

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## Economic production and working life

New industries, many with overseas capital, are mushrooming in all states ... The Australia of the future is a land of promise, wide open for development; for building ideals and ideas into material things designed to make living better for all.<sup>46</sup>

### *Reconstructing a capital city economy*

Commerce in central Adelaide suffered when Charles Moore's department store was burnt to a shell in the city's worst fire in 1948. The fire 'became a roaring inferno ... when great masses of the rubberised roofing crashed to the ground floor and set alight to stock there.' A 'tremendous surge of traffic and sightseers' built to a crowd of 20,000. They screamed as the debris crashed, narrowly missing firemen and 'sighed with relief when the firemen were noticed unharmed after the smoke had cleared.' Commissioner of Police (WF Johns) said this was the most spectacular fire he had seen in the city and the crowd and numbers of cars the greatest he had known. All available policemen were sent to control the crowd with mounted off-duty police galloping to the fire in plainclothes.<sup>47</sup>

The first phase of the city centre's postwar history 'involved neither development nor redevelopment but an artificially-prolonged period of stasis due to prolonged wartime controls'.<sup>48</sup> Lifting of Commonwealth restrictions on share trading in 1947 and federal Labor's defeat in 1949 brought a wave of business investment in Australia's city centres, reinforced by profits from population growth and consumer spending. Established firms expanded and new companies multiplied but the physical impact was modest until after 1953 when controls on non-residential building were lifted.

Sir Norman Young considered that there were five major local businesses in Adelaide during the 1950s: Elder Smith, The Bank of Adelaide, the South Australian Brewing Company, Advertiser Newspapers and the Adelaide Steamship Company.<sup>49</sup> Most of them built or 'modernised' offices. The leading architectural firm Woods Bagot was deeply involved in the city's construction boom, and designed Da Costa, Bennett and Fisher and Dalgety buildings, City Mutual Building, the Advertiser Building, CBC

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<sup>46</sup> A *glimpse of Australia*, FH Johnston Publishing Co, Sydney, c1958, np.

<sup>47</sup> *Sunday Mail* 3 March 1948 [Newscuttings book, S Marsden collection.] What was left of the building was much later restored as the Supreme Court.

<sup>48</sup> S Marsden, *Urban heritage: the rise and postwar development of Australia's capital city centres* ACNT & AHC, Canberra, 2000, p. 53.

<sup>49</sup> G McCarthy, review: *Figuratively speaking: the reminiscences, experiences and observations of Sir Norman Young* (1991), *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no 21, 1993, p. 161.

Bank, ANZ Bank, National Bank and adjacent Tourist Bureau on King William Street, and Prudential and Bagot's Trustee buildings on North Terrace.<sup>50</sup> The firm's Sir James Irwin designed Bennett and Fisher House in Currie Street as one of the last large city buildings using Georgian design theories, and it was built in traditional red brick and freestone by Fricker Brothers in 1962.<sup>51</sup>

The MLC Building (1957) in Victoria Square marked a radical departure from such designs and it is the only commercial building of this period in South Australia included on the RNE. Features of the lightweight building included fireproofing of the steel framework with fibrous plaster, instead of concrete, floors of steel sheets covered with concrete, and glass external walls. The building presents a stark contrast to the GPO and other nearby 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings and traditionalists thought it 'totally unsuitable for the South Australian climate'.<sup>52</sup>

Least remarked was the utilitarian News Building on North Terrace where the 'boy publisher' Rupert Murdoch began to build what has become the world's largest media empire, News Corporation. By the mid-1950s his tabloid evening paper the *News* was making enough money for him to begin to look beyond 'small-town Adelaide', and he acquired his second newspaper in Perth, commuting from South Australia in a DC-3 or DC-4 plane. In 1956 Murdoch married Patricia Booker, who had worked at Myers Department Store in Adelaide, and on their honeymoon they inspected the properties he had acquired. 'Early on, Murdoch understood the potency of the combination of America and the box. "In the 1950s you had to be in TV," he said later.' He saw that commercial television would become big business in Australia. His group, Southern Television Corporation, was granted the Channel 9 licence. Kenneth Milne designed the Channel 9 station buildings in Tynte Street, North Adelaide. Murdoch rushed to get the station first on air in South Australia, succeeding despite a fire which made the studio unusable just before they went to air in July 1959. 'Our first transmission was from a tape-recorder sitting on the WC seat bundled up with chicken wire.'<sup>53</sup>

Rundle Street was confirmed as Adelaide's commercial centre when Charles Birks was bought in 1954 by the Sydney firm of David Jones, which announced plans in 1955 to replace Birks' department store with 'an 11-storey American-style store'.<sup>54</sup> The elegant store was built in 1959–62, its white and black marble upper facade unbroken by windows, permitting larger and more flexible floor areas than in older stores. South Australia's first high-rise 'American-style' store also represented the firm's expansion during the 1950s into a national retail chain, with other acquisitions in Queensland, the ACT and Victoria.<sup>55</sup> Many other South Australian firms were taken over by interstate firms in this period, signalling the end of an era when national business headquarters were built in Adelaide.

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<sup>50</sup> Page, pp. 216–17.

<sup>51</sup> Review of Register of City of Adelaide heritage items, City of Adelaide heritage study, Oct 1990, 15.2: Bennett and Fisher House.

<sup>52</sup> Page, p. 216.

<sup>53</sup> Shawcross, 1992, pp. 88–9, 91–2 (1<sup>st</sup> quotation), 94, 97 (2<sup>nd</sup> quotation), 103. Shawcross suggests that Murdoch began to form the foundations of his publishing company in Sydney in the 1960s but it is clear from his own account that the foundations were laid – including newspapers, magazines, newsprint and television – while Murdoch was in Adelaide during the 1950s.

<sup>54</sup> *Sunday Mail*, May 1955 [Newscutting book, S Marsden collection.]

<sup>55</sup> *Story of David Jones*, David Jones Ltd, Sydney, nd, [www.davidjones.com.au/about/story\\_of\\_djs.jsp](http://www.davidjones.com.au/about/story_of_djs.jsp)

The modern city centre is Australia's marketplace, its investment centre, its office block and department store. The rise and spread of office blocks is expressive not only of modern architecture but also of wide economic and political changes, for example the great increase in employment in service industries since the war relative to primary and secondary industries...<sup>56</sup>

'High-rise' offices and stores began to efface the colonial built form and the 'central business district' invaded long-established residential and industrial areas. However, the changes were slower in Adelaide than in Sydney and Melbourne and the low-scale architecture and varied landuses of the old city persisted for the most part until the 1960s.

### ***Mining***

Mining was a major industry, and more significant in South Australia than in most other states (before the development of Western Australian iron deposits in the 1970s). Middleback Range near Whyalla supplied most of the ore for Australian steelmaking. This was shipped by BHP to its Newcastle and Port Kembla steelworks until reaching agreement with the state government to produce pig iron at Whyalla (1941) when it opened a blast furnace and a shipyard.<sup>57</sup>

While Middleback ore supplied a national industry, Leigh Creek coal fuelled the state's own industrial development. Brown coal was discovered near Leigh Creek in 1888 and worked intermittently but its quality and transport costs meant that the mine was not viable and South Australia continued to depend on black coal from NSW. Wartime shipping shortages and strikes made development of the South Australian deposit 'essentially a wartime emergency project' and Playford pushed for its development.<sup>58</sup> The mine's viability was helped by the introduction of large open-cut excavating machines and a new line to Port Augusta built by Commonwealth Railways. Mining started in 1943 under the Engineering and Water Supply Department and was transferred in 1948 to ETSA, which controlled the coalfield, built the town and used its entire production at Port Augusta power station, delivering the first consignment in 1955. The use of Leigh Creek coal enabled ETSA to keep electricity tariffs level for the whole time that Playford remained premier and beyond, from 1952–71.<sup>59</sup>

Australia's first uranium mine was located at Radium Hill. Britain asked the Commonwealth Government to evaluate Australian uranium provinces in 1944. Mount Painter and Radium Hill were two of the world's known workable deposits and so drew international attention as a source for making atomic bombs and as fuel for the atomic power industry. The USA also wanted a long-term, secure uranium supply and was prepared to assist in exploration and to contribute £4 million to develop Radium Hill and to build a treatment plant at Port Pirie.

In 1945 the state government took control of the mining, treatment and use of radioactive materials and vested their ownership in the Crown. State legislation authorising uranium mining at Radium Hill followed a High Court decision that a

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<sup>56</sup> S Marsden, *Urban heritage*, p. 42.

<sup>57</sup> The shipyard was closed in 1978. *BHP chronology*, BHP Billiton, nd, [www.bhpbilliton.com/bbContentRepository/AboutUs/CompanyOverview/History/AboutBHP/BHPChronology.pdf](http://www.bhpbilliton.com/bbContentRepository/AboutUs/CompanyOverview/History/AboutBHP/BHPChronology.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> N Klaasen, in *Playford's South Australia*, p.136.

<sup>59</sup> *The Leigh Creek coalfield*, ETSA, Adelaide 1983, p. 16.



statutory authority and parliamentary funding were necessary. Facilities were moved from Mount Painter to Radium Hill by 1949. By 1952, the Radium Hill ore reserves were proved large enough for economic extraction, although the shaft was sunk to more than 400 metres. A township and railway were built and the mine was opened on 10 September 1954 by the Governor-General, Sir William Slim.

Crushed ore was railed to Port Pirie for processing. Uranium was treated using sulphuric acid leaching. Sulphur was in short supply and the Mines Department gave priority to the search for pyrites as it could be processed into sulphuric acid. Deposits at the Nairne Pyrites Works were found to contain high-grade sulphur.<sup>60</sup> The department and BHP did experimental work to test the recovery process and the new pyrites mine was opened in 1956. This led to the expansion of sulphuric acid plants at Port Adelaide and Port Pirie. Sulphuric acid from BHP's Port Pirie plant was supplied to the Port Pirie Uranium Treatment Plant and in 1956 uranium oxide concentrate from the works was used to produce Australia's first sample of pure uranium metal.<sup>61</sup> Reserves at Radium Hill were soon exhausted and overseas contracts were fulfilled and the mine was closed in December 1961.<sup>62</sup>

The Mines Department encouraged a statewide search for uranium, issuing handbooks and hiring out Geiger-Mueller counters (one was displayed on the Commonwealth jubilee exhibition train in 1951 and landholders and prospectors were invited to bring in ores to test for radioactivity).<sup>63</sup> There was uranium in many parts of the state – such as a small mine on Fleurieu Peninsula at Myponga – and it was mined with no concern about the dangers.<sup>64</sup>

John Bonython, Robert Bristowe, Sir Douglas Mawson and Sir Henry Newland incorporated a new company, Santos (South Australia Northern Territory Oil Search) in 1954, and went exploring north of Port Augusta. Drilling for oil began at Wilkatana in 1955 and sightseers came 'on Sunday outings to gaze on this wonder of the north'. The first deep well was drilled at Innamincka in 1959 but the first strike of commercial quantities of natural gas was not made until 1963 at Gidgealpa.<sup>65</sup>

Table 3: Net value of primary and secondary production in South Australia, 1945–60.

	Primary	Secondary	Total (£)
1945–46	30,406,652	25,601,628	56,008,280
1946–47	40,316,106	31,066,494	71,382,600
1947–48	71,863,506	38,669,705	110,533,211
1948–49	59,294,905	43,721,344	103,016,249
1949–50	76,335,854	52,353,076	128,688,930
1950–51	118,371,979	67,809,096	186,181,075
1951–52	105,972,759	83,246,632	189,219,391
1952–53	123,204,341	89,188,947	212,393,288

<sup>60</sup> Department of Works Annual Report 1951–52, p. 4.

<sup>61</sup> O'Neil, pp. 163–4; Cross, *Fallout*, p. 30.

<sup>62</sup> B O'Neil in *Playford's South Australia*, pp. 156, 158, 160; SAPD:HA, T. Playford 23/8/1949, p. ?.

<sup>63</sup> O'Neil, p. 160.

<sup>64</sup> Information provided to author by Dr P Bell, 2003.

<sup>65</sup> RM Gibbs, *Bulls, bears and wildcats. A centenary history of the Stock Exchange of Adelaide*, Peacock Publications, Adelaide, 1988, p. 349. (including quotation); *The history of Santos*, Santos, 2001[?], <http://www.santos.com.au/profile/history/default.asp%20> The vast Moomba gasfield was discovered in 1966.

1953–54	112,484,422	100,221,462	212,705,884
1954–55	109,849,225	111,027,712	220,876,937
1955–56	125,941,329	120,935,925	246,877,254
1956–57	153,763,638	126,766,208	280,529,846
1957–58	112,521,111	133,285,136	245,806,247
1958–59	127,202,915	139,809,762	267,012,677
1959–60	112,727,503	162,973,626	275,701,129
1960–61	132,813,640	170,061,744	302,875,384

Source: SAPP 3: 1965–66, 'Statistical register... of South Australia, 1962–63... Pt V [a]...', p 63.

### ***Agriculture***

When you come to Adelaide for the Festival of Arts you will have an excellent opportunity of tasting the full range of Australian wines and brandies. You may also like to see our picturesque vineyards and wineries. The Winemakers' Association of South Australia will make arrangements for such visits.<sup>66</sup>

Attention has focused on the state's industrialisation but public works were also directed (as in the past) at supporting agriculture. As Table 3 indicates, the value of secondary production surpassed agriculture for the first time in 1955 but agricultural production also showed a rapid and substantial increase. There were two main and inter-related factors: firstly, after a long lull, there was a 'great leap forward' in scientific and technological practices; and, secondly, South Australia's last agricultural frontiers were opened as large developmental works.

New lands cleared for cultivation benefited from the technique of replacing trace elements in the soil. Scientists at the Commonwealth Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR, later CSIRO) had found that trace elements were essential for healthy pastures and livestock. CSIRO and the University of Adelaide's Waite Institute discovered that the sandy soil of the upper South East was made useful with additions of zinc. The largest area developed under the 1949 *Land Settlement (Development Leases) Act* was by the Australian Mutual Providence Society (AMP) in the upper South East. There, farmers sowed subterranean clover, lucerne and perennial rye grass, transforming the Ninety Mile Desert into the productive Coonah Downs.

The 1950s were CSIRO's golden decade when it developed many new technologies, including successful release of the myxoma virus in 1950 to control rabbits. Australia's farm production leaped as rabbit populations were cut by up to 99 % in the first two years.<sup>67</sup> Rabbit numbers grew again as new generations developed resistance to myxomatosis but remained less than before, giving pasturelands and native vegetation the chance to recover.

The 1850s–80s and the 1950s–80s were the years of most intense development in farm machinery. In the 1850s–80s new mechanical devices cut the cost and effort of land clearance (mallee rollers) and cultivation (stump-jump ploughs). In the 1950s–80s these devices were improved, with cultivators (multi-share, tractor-hauled disc ploughs and harrows), water management devices and self propelled header-

<sup>66</sup> *Adelaide Festival of Arts 12<sup>th</sup>–26<sup>th</sup> March, 1960* (first festival) brochure, Griffin Press, Adelaide, 1960 [S Marsden collection]

<sup>67</sup> CSIRO, *75 years of Australian science: the 1950s*, Dec 2001, [www.csiro.au/csiro/75thann/1950.html](http://www.csiro.au/csiro/75thann/1950.html)

combine harvesters.<sup>68</sup> The most significant change in our period was from horses to tractors, enabling the use of such large machines.

There were some problems with moving to motor machinery and also in the move from storing barley in bags to bulk storage.<sup>69</sup> South Australia was one of the last of the world's significant wheat and barley producers to adopt bulk handling, possibly because the government wished to maintain rural employment in bagging and loading. It was not until the 1950s that 'the skyline of the rural towns and railway-sidings became dominated by towering concrete grain silos as bulk-handling of grain finally replaced more than a century of transporting grain in sacks.'<sup>70</sup>

Mechanisation reduced production costs but it also reduced the rural population, and as cereal farms became more productive and small properties were absorbed the towns shrank. In the Lower North, these effects can be seen in the landscape, 'where unoccupied houses surrounded by wheatfields are a common sight'.<sup>71</sup>

The change to bulk handling was introduced obliquely in typical Playford style. In 1948 Broken Hill Proprietary Company (BHP) applied for approval to build a 3,000 foot jetty at Ardrossan (Yorke Peninsula) to load bulk dolomite from its quarry, as a flux for the BHP steel furnaces. The government stipulated that the jetty must also be suitable to handle bulk grain. In 1952 the Australian Wheat Board built a timber horizontal silo with a million bushel capacity at Ardrossan. Bulk handling of barley was also introduced at Ardrossan.<sup>72</sup> The first local grain silo in South Australia was opened at Paskeville in January 1956 and another was built at Bute a few months later. There were two forms: horizontal silos and tall white cylinders.

Motor trucks replaced horse-drawn wagons during the interwar years, and in the 1950s tractors and 'utilities' finally replaced horses on farms. Farmers converted stables, built new sheds, enlarged paddocks and removed old fences, wind-breaks and trees to accommodate the new machines. Mechanisation extended to other farm tasks and domestic life with similarly visible effects. Milking and maintenance was mechanised and lighting, heating and refrigeration were improved, made possible by the government's rural electrification schemes. ETSA wires and poles reached most properties within the settled areas by the late 1960s, and also electrified infrastructure such as Berri Pumping Station (in 1959).<sup>73</sup>

Murray Riverland irrigated areas comprised the blocks of individual irrigators, private Irrigation Trusts, and state and Commonwealth government irrigation districts (see *also part 6*). Jack Seecamp, who began fruit growing at Renmark in the late 1940s, recalls growers using furrow irrigation to water dried fruit and citrus crops but some were introducing the first sprinklers. Other mechanical changes came 'thick and fast' with sprinklers, followed later by drip irrigation. It was just as important to know when to stop irrigating, 'because looking back, in those days we certainly put on way too much water'. He worked part-time for CSIRO, researching how to drain the

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<sup>68</sup> RL Heathcote, 'The Transformation of the Countryside', in J Walker, ed, *South Australia's Heritage*, Department of Environment, Land and Planning, 1986, pp. 20–21.

<sup>69</sup> See P Payne & P Donovan, *The Australian Barley Board*, pp. 51, 55.

<sup>70</sup> Heathcote, 1986, p. 22.

<sup>71</sup> Austral Archaeology Pty Ltd, *Heritage of the Upper North*, Department For Environment and Heritage, Adelaide, 2001, pp.44–5 (quotation).

<sup>72</sup> Austral Archaeology, 2001, pp. 42–43.

<sup>73</sup> Heathcote, 1986, pp. 22–23, SAPP 1959.



floodplain soils. 'The '56 flood was the watershed ...because it threw up a problem that had been simmering in the district, this matter of salt and salinity.' The flood raised public interest in the river, and when the floodwaters receded, Renmark Irrigation Trust started to provide every grower with a drainage outlet.<sup>74</sup>

Government was also responsible for the most extraordinary single structure built for primary producers: the Dog Fence (1946–47).<sup>75</sup> It is one of Australia's three great fences (the others are rabbit-proof fences in WA and Queensland). The Dog Fence linked a series of disconnected vermin fences in South Australia, NSW and Queensland, spanning 5,400 kilometres, with 2,200 km in South Australia. It protects southern sheep country from dingoes, and grazing land north of the fence is given over to cattle which can defend themselves from attack. Constant patrols were (and are) needed to maintain the fence and were done on camel until the early 1960s.<sup>76</sup>



Berri pumping station (Photo: C Cosgrove, 2003)

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<sup>74</sup> F Bainger (quoting J Seecamp), *Rural legends: Jack Seecamp*, ABC Rural Online, 2003, [www.abc.net.au/rural/legends/stories/14\\_1.htm#reporter](http://www.abc.net.au/rural/legends/stories/14_1.htm#reporter)

<sup>75</sup> *Dog Fence Act No 34 of 1946*(came into operation 17 June 1947) *SA Government Gazette* 12 June 1947.

<sup>76</sup> See also J Woodford, *The Dog Fence*, Text, 2003.



War Service Land Settlement Nissen hut, now at Loxton Pioneer Village. (Photo: S Marsden, 2003)

Linked with rising capital investment were efforts to improve soils and diversify production following the ruinous droughts and erosion of the 1940s. Farmers developed 'a productive drylands system integrating cereal crops and stock'.<sup>77</sup> Mixed farming replaced single cropping and pastures were sown in rotation with legumes to build up soil nitrogen. Sheep and cattle numbers rose dramatically, helped also by high prices (during the Korean War). 'These changes in land use were accompanied by an expansion of the cropped land area beyond the previous scale of the 1920s, and an increase of the pastoral leases almost back to the previous peak of the 1880s.'<sup>78</sup>

My first teaching appointment was at Naracoorte, in 1954, when the wool growing areas were riding the wave of the Wool Boom. The phrase 'A pound a pound' is still the defining slogan of the time, at a time when it also bought a lot. Naracoorte was booming, with nine banks and, so they say, the highest density of Jaguars on the road in the country. People were able to pay off long-standing debt and replace machinery, which previously they could neither afford nor obtain. Many farmers bought their first tractor then. It was, however, a very destructive period, when it was a case of demolish the old and build new. Wool Boom houses abound in the district: Mount Gambier stone, with tiled roofs, and the cottage look, furnished with pride in antiques or reproductions.<sup>79</sup>

Mechanisation led to larger but fewer farms and a population decline in old 'settled areas' as farm tasks and their labourers were replaced by machinery. Farmers also needed larger properties to pay for the machines but incomes did not rise as quickly

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<sup>77</sup> Marsden, 'South Australia', p 599.

<sup>78</sup> Heathcote, 1986, p. 23.

<sup>79</sup> J Murdoch, *Recollections*.

as purchase costs.<sup>80</sup> The population also ran down as farmers took advantage of reconstruction schemes based on the *Marginal Lands Act 1940* and sold land to the government for reallocation to neighbours, enabling production on a more economic scale.<sup>81</sup> Between the 1930s–60s most areas lost from 33–50% of their farmers as economic pressures forced an increase in farm sizes.<sup>82</sup>

As a countervailing trend, land development schemes raised farm numbers, at least in the 1950s along the River Murray, on Kangaroo Island and in the South East. In the South East, pastoral estates were broken up and nearly 400 families were allocated land under the War Service Land Settlement Scheme. The first soldier settler farmhouse was completed by South Australian Housing Trust contractors at Mingbool in 1947. Max and Lois Marsden, who had both served in the war, moved onto their land with their two young children in 1950. Their property of 706 acres (280 hectares) was one of three soldier settlement farms along Piccaninny Lane, between Millicent and Beachport. As with post-1918 soldier settlement, many did not remain in the long run and the Marsden farm and others later reverted to larger holdings. Their history is marked by buildings such as the Marsden farmhouse 'Yallambee', one of many built for the soldier settlers by the South Australian Housing Trust.<sup>83</sup> (See also section 5.)

The rapid rise in Adelaide's population concealed an equally rapid fall in primary producers. Until the late 1950s regional Adelaide (from Marion in the south to Tea Tree Gully in the north) was both rural and suburban, and was one of the oldest and most important wine regions in Australia. Today's remaining vineyards form a nationally significant heritage and demonstrate in their juxtaposition with suburbia the postwar emphasis on urbanisation, its rapid pace and the suburban homogeneity that replaced over a century of mixed rural-urban life. Most farmland was acquired by state agencies in the 1940s–60s and continued to produce grapes (and other crops) for many years until finally built over. The rise of horticulture in Angle Vale-Virginia on the northern plains dates from the 1950s as producers moved from Marion. 'Vine-growing in this area was pioneered by the Norman family of Underdale who had just lost their Marion vineyards to the Housing Trust.'<sup>84</sup>

Vine growing expanded elsewhere, in traditional areas like the Barossa Valley and in new Riverland plantings and the South East. More importantly, changes in wine making and marketing increased wine consumption and fundamentally altered tastes from fortified wines to table wines. In the 1950s winemakers such as Colin Gramp and Max Schubert experimented with improving red and white wines. Gramp introduced cold pressure fermentation for riesling, which revolutionised white wine making in Australia, and marketed a popular light wine called Barossa Pearl.<sup>85</sup> Gramp was also a founding member of the Barossa Vintage Festival initiated by the wineries in 1949.

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<sup>80</sup> Kwan, p. 94.

<sup>81</sup> Heathcote, 1986, p 20. For further information on the effects of the Marginal Lands Scheme, see DJ Hopgood, *South Australian Geographical Journal* 2001, vol 100, p 16.

<sup>82</sup> Heathcote, p. 23.

<sup>83</sup> J Marsden, 'Yallambee, a soldier settlement farmhouse, South East of South Australia', in S Marsden, ed, *Our house: histories of Australian homes*, AHC, Canberra 2001, [www.heritage.gov.au/ourhouse/essay20.html](http://www.heritage.gov.au/ourhouse/essay20.html)

<sup>84</sup> GC Bishop, *The vineyards of Adelaide*, Lynton Publications, Blackwood, 1977, p 119.

<sup>85</sup> 'Orlando Vineyards: Gramps Barossa Valley', Postcards, [www.postcards.sa.com.au/features/gramps.html](http://www.postcards.sa.com.au/features/gramps.html)

### *Developing South Australia's manufacturing*

Intervention under Playford extended to state provisioned infrastructure and attempts to lower other industrial costs as an inducement to interstate and international capital... The Premier relied on what has been called a 'salesman's' ... approach to attract to South Australia firms intending to establish in Australia behind a tariff and import licensing protection wall to secure access to the local market... In an expanding economy with import protection and widespread shortages (as in post-war Australia), import replacement probably provided the greatest opportunities for rapid industrialisation.<sup>86</sup>

South Australia's postwar boom derived from manufacturing that expanded with state government encouragement and federal government protection. From World War II the Commonwealth subscribed to Keynesian economic theory and used import quotas and tariffs to protect local manufacturing industries. Foreign and domestic investment was concentrated in industries such as clothing, consumer goods and cars, catering for the Australian market. By the mid-1950s, the expansion of manufacturing, together with immigration bringing in both workers and consumers, triggered an economic boom. The biggest gains were made in car and appliance manufacturing and their feeder industries, which grew with the boom in consumer spending after the war.

The government's plan for industrialisation 'resulted in the construction of the ship-building yard and the steelworks at Whyalla, the conversion of the wartime munitions works at Salisbury into the long-range weapons establishment that operated in conjunction with the Woomera rocket range, and the establishment of a large part of Australia's burgeoning car-manufacturing industry and other secondary industries in Adelaide'.<sup>87</sup> The highly significant private-sector industrial development of this period was mainly in import substitution industries, protected by the Commonwealth's high tariffs, assisted by state government measures, and supplied with labour by Commonwealth and state-assisted immigration.

State support for industrial expansion was most evident at Woodville, Salisbury, Elizabeth, Port Augusta, Whyalla and Port Pirie. The Commonwealth retained its huge Salisbury Explosives Factory as a Weapons Research Establishment and sold or leased Finsbury and Hendon munitions factories to private industry, although Playford failed to persuade GMH to use the Finsbury works to house its Australian car project.<sup>88</sup> The first three industries to move into Finsbury in 1947 were Tecalemit, Pope Products and Vactric Electrical Appliances.<sup>89</sup> Finsbury soon housed 'almost all the heavy industry (mostly engineering, automotive and "whitegoods") the government had hoped to see established in South Australia'.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> M Stutchbury, 'State government industrialisation strategies', in K Sheridan, ed, *The state as developer. Public enterprise in South Australia*, RAIPA, & Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1986, p. 72.

<sup>87</sup> BL Howarth, 'Post-war settlement patterns of the British and Irish', Jupp, p 425.

<sup>88</sup> D Rich, 'Tom's vision? Playford and industrialisation', O'Neil et al, p. 109.

<sup>89</sup> Kwan, vol 2, p. 102.

<sup>90</sup> S Marsden, *A history of Woodville*, City of Woodville, Adelaide 1977, p. 228.



Perry Engineering Works (interior), Railway Terrace, Mile End (Photo: S Marsden, 2003)

In 1946, after offering generous inducements, Playford announced that Philips Electrical Industries would transfer from Sydney to Hendon. Philips bought the entire ammunition factory, eventually covering 64 acres, and it was opened in 1947. By 1957, at the peak of production, there were nearly 3,500 workers, many of them female at a time when there was little other factory work available for women.<sup>91</sup>

General Motors Holden's plant was a short distance from Philips and also in Woodville Council. The Holden car was manufactured by GMH in Melbourne and Adelaide from 1948 and GMH expanded the Woodville plant to the fullest possible extent at the limited suburban site. The South Australian Housing Trust gained GMH agreement to build its second South Australian factory at Elizabeth. The premier boasted that Elizabeth's development 'brought two million square feet of factory space by one of the greatest corporations in the world'.<sup>92</sup> Production started at the new plant in 1958 and it was opened in 1959. The massive manufacturing and assembly buildings have since been refitted but the administration building retains its plain symmetry in concrete, steel and glass, reflecting the transition from the pre-war Moderne style to simpler 1960s industrial architecture.<sup>93</sup> Woods Bagot architect, James Irwin, was closely involved in the expansion and conversion of the Woodville plant and in the design of the Elizabeth factory.<sup>94</sup>

Both GMH and Chrysler extended their South Australian factories and built up supplier industries. Chrysler (Aust) Ltd occupied the Richards premises at Mile End (part is still in use as a store). In 1957 Chrysler moved to Clovelly Park (Tonsley Park),

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<sup>91</sup> Marsden, *Woodville*, p. 231.

<sup>92</sup> Alex Ramsay, quoted in D Nicholas, *The pacemaker: the Playford story*, Brolga Books, Adelaide, 1969, p. 90.

<sup>93</sup> Stropin & Marsden, p. 28.

<sup>94</sup> M Page, *Sculptors in space*, RAlA (South Australian Chapter), Adelaide, 1986, p. 199.

buying the land from the South Australian Housing Trust, which had encouraged the move to provide jobs in the new southern suburbs. Caradoc Ashton, Fisher Woodhead, Beaumont-Smith designed the factory and it was set in a park, demonstrating that factories need not be visually offensive.

During the 1940s four-fifths of Australian car manufacturing was concentrated in Adelaide, with GMH, Richards/Chrysler and many supplementary firms.<sup>95</sup> This development even had an impact on improving the taste of peanuts at Adelaide's Central Market. In the 1950s, Charlesworth Nuts drew on Holden's engineering talent to construct a revolving drum that was loaded with 70 pounds (30 kg) of peanuts and roasted over a gas flame.<sup>96</sup>

Manufacturing also expanded in the belt from western Adelaide to Port Adelaide. Lawson and Cheesman designed the new HH Tandy confectionery factory on Angas Street (later the Workers Educational Association).<sup>97</sup> One of the largest firms was Perry's Engineering, a family business directed by Sir Frank Tennyson Perry (Legislative Councillor 1947–65). The 'Mile End works, with its range of mechanical and structural engineering activity, had expanded through wartime production and the acquisition of low-cost munitions factory areas to emerge as one of the largest firms in Australia'. The foundry still operates at Mile End but the firm later merged with a Melbourne company that closed the plant in 1969.

The same long-term consequences of postwar expansion would affect other South Australian firms. Humes of Keswick produced the pipes for the Morgan-Whyalla and Mannum-Adelaide pipelines, and by the 1980s was a multi-national company with headquarters in Melbourne. Many factories were relocated to West Torrens, Enfield, Woodville and Port Adelaide Councils from their original city sites. For example, in 1952, biscuit manufacturer W Menz & Co began operations at Marleston in a big Nissen building shipped from England.<sup>98</sup>

The Hills Hoist rotary clothes line was developed by Lancelot Leonard (Lance) Hill in 1945 for his wife, Sherry, to maximise limited space for the family's washing in their Glenunga backyard. The hoist was popular with friends, and they developed a family business, placing advertisements in the *Advertiser* on 4 December 1945. In 1946 they bought three ex-army trucks and engaged staff at 262a Glen Osmond Road, Fullarton. Hills has grown into a national firm with the Hills Hoist an Australian icon celebrated in the opening ceremonies of the Sydney Olympics in 2000.<sup>99</sup>

Industrialisation of non-metropolitan towns was a key feature of the time and had proportionately much greater impact on regional South Australia than in Adelaide. Most was connected with processing of raw materials: minerals, timber and foodstuffs, including a fruit cannery opened at Berri in 1959. Two distinct urban-industrial regions were developed, later named the 'Iron Triangle' to the north of

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<sup>95</sup> *Water resources development 1836–1986*, E&WS Dept, Adelaide, 1987, p. 13.

<sup>96</sup> C Murphy, *The market: stories, history and recipes from the Adelaide Central Market*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2003, p. 53.

<sup>97</sup> Page, p. 199.

<sup>98</sup> S Marsden, 'Sir Frank Tennyson Perry', in J Ritchie, gen ed, *ADB 15*, MUP, Carlton, 2000.

pp. 595–97 (quotation, p 596); P Donovan, *Between the city and the sea. A history of West Torrens from settlement in 1836 to the present day*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1986, pp. 194–99.

<sup>99</sup> *Heritage icons 2001*, National Trust of South Australia, 2001, [www.nationaltrustsa.org.au/heritage\\_icons\\_2001.htm#hills\\_hoist](http://www.nationaltrustsa.org.au/heritage_icons_2001.htm#hills_hoist)

Adelaide, and the 'Green Triangle' in the South East. The towns forming the Iron Triangle around the head of Spencer's Gulf were Port Pirie, Port Augusta and Whyalla. All three were established towns and Port Pirie was the largest industrial centre outside Adelaide, but a combination of private and public investment in the 1940s–60s significantly expanded them. At Port Pirie the Mines Department's Uranium Treatment Works opened in 1955 and Broken Hill Associated Smelters (BHAS) commissioned an up-draught sintering plant in the same year and opened a new lead refinery in 1959.<sup>100</sup>

'The Whyalla the visitor sees today [1952] dates in essence from the war years.' Whyalla's three roles were iron ore shipment, pig iron production and ship building. Work began in 1940 at the shipyard and it had launched 22 ships by 1952, when 800 men were still employed there. The blast furnace was blown-in in 1941. War industry boosted the town's population to 7,500 by 1945. Production of ingot steel started in 1949, together with the first part of a marine engineering plant.<sup>101</sup>

BHP began to recruit migrant labour in the late 1940s and took full advantage of the Commonwealth's immigration program. An added advantage was the two years migrants were required to work under government direction which 'provided welcome stability in the company's labour force, and was particularly desirable in the new settlements where the lack of urban amenities made labour hard to hold'. By the end of the 1950s one-third of iron and steel workers were migrants, who formed 70% of the additional men recruited during the decade.<sup>102</sup> Most were single men who were easily housed in barracks and hostels, but at Whyalla the state government also supplied South Australian Housing Trust houses. Whyalla became 'probably the largest one-company town in the world, yet, paradoxically, it is also one of the most extravagantly publicly financed urban projects in Australia'.<sup>103</sup>

### *Working*

I was born and raised in a workmen's camp  
where men carved a reservoir out of scrub and rock  
with fingers fond of the feel of a bottle and neck  
of a woman ...<sup>104</sup>

Accounts of the state's industrialisation often skim over the huge effort this represented in hard physical labour, despite the introduction of the 40 hour working week in 1948. This encouraged mechanisation but serious shortages of workers persisted until the early 1950s. Assisted migrants were required to work for two years under contract to the Commonwealth, as directed by state governments. In South Australia, many were sent upcountry to labour on E&WS pipelines and reservoirs and in agricultural work such as fruit picking but most were factory workers. Even so, the E&WS continued to advertise for 1,000 more men just for construction works but these were the years of full employment and above-award or overtime pay and the available men were sometimes unreliable. Men engaged on irrigation scheme work

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<sup>100</sup> DA Cumming & G Moxham, *They built South Australia*, the Authors, 1986, p.220. Sinter – to bring about the agglomeration of particles of a metal by heating, under pressure, to just below the melting point of a substance.

<sup>101</sup> *Whyalla's place in the steel industry's operations*, BHP Co. Pty Ltd, May 1952 (pamphlet) n.p.

<sup>102</sup> H Hughes, *The Australian iron and steel industry 1848–1962*, MUP, Parkville, 1964, pp. 169 (quotation), 170.

<sup>103</sup> R Kreigler, *Working for the company: work and control in the Whyalla Shipyard*, OUP, Melbourne, 1980, p.2.

<sup>104</sup> Martin Johnson's book of poetry, *The Clothes-prop man* (Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2002) recalls the lives of the immigrant men and women in the work camps while building the South Para Reservoir.



at Berri and Glossop used horses and carts and had to dig trenches up to 20 feet deep by hand. Many were alcoholics who patronised the local wineries, and others were Displaced Persons on compulsory country labour.<sup>105</sup>

Some migrant workers (mainly Italians) had been internees or POWs in South Australia during the war: a German held at Loveday had worked on missile research and was employed after the war at the Weapons Research Establishment.<sup>106</sup> The work ethic was strong amongst both Australian and immigrant communities. Both valued regular, paid work as a means of re-establishing themselves and their families after the disruptions of depression and war. 'Mum and Dad had suffered themselves at the hands of the Depression. Mum's father had been put out of work... she and her elder sister had supported the family of five children. Dad had been one of the teachers to have his pay cut along with all public servants... Both saw a secure pay packet as the most important thing in the world.'<sup>107</sup>

Throughout Australia, the process of women entering manufacturing continued with the growth of industry after the war, and a further important change came from 1950 with the influx of Greek and Italian migrant workers.<sup>108</sup> Married women worked a 'double shift', combining paid work with mothering and housekeeping. Working life for most women – especially Australian wives – remained the household and farmyard. Advances in engineering and technology had as great an impact in homes as in factories and on farms. Some changes increased women's workload. Cooking, washing, childcare, gardening and shopping, services once provided by servants, and travelling suppliers to middle-class homes, were taken over by the housewife. New machines and new standards of hygiene also raised expectations of housekeeping.

The improved facilities available to many housewives were not provided to Aboriginal and migrant women in the remote working camps. A German migrant was told that she and her husband must either separate or 'go together out bush to the Nullabor'. When she asked the employment officer 'how it was possible to have a house out bush with no electricity but that we would have a fridge,' the response was, 'We do not speak to women!' At Barton on the Nullabor, there were only five solid houses in the whole camp.

There was no electricity, therefore you had to wash by hand: copper kettle, wood fire. To do your cooking, you had to chop wood. Because our camp had hills around it, there was very little wind and in summer it was very hot. You couldn't go to a shop and buy anything. ... Ever heard of the Sugar Train? They delivered all the groceries. In the beginning they didn't have a carriage [cold room] where they could store food. All they had were wooden boxes and a wet sack over it.<sup>109</sup>

The new towns established during the 1940s and 1950s were all built as working places where the work was intricately connected with home life and the social organisation of the settlement.

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<sup>105</sup> Hammerton, pp. 233–34.

<sup>106</sup> R Gower, 'Life in internment: the Loveday experience', paper presented at 12<sup>th</sup> State History Conference, Renmark, May 2003.

<sup>107</sup> Murdoch, *Recollections*.

<sup>108</sup> M Nugent, *Women's employment and professionalism in Australia. Histories, themes and places*, AHC, Canberra, 2002, pp. 33–34.

<sup>109</sup> I Muenstermann, 'German immigrant women in South Australia since 1945 – an overview', p. 8, *Tromso Women proceedings*, [http://www.skk.uit.no/WW99/papers/Muenstermann\\_Ingrid.pdf](http://www.skk.uit.no/WW99/papers/Muenstermann_Ingrid.pdf)



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## Developing South Australia's service industries

In a rapidly developing economy such as that of Australia at present, it has been vital that public authorities should assume control of the planned development and financing of power, transport, housing, water supplies and land settlement. The long-term planning which is required for these undertakings, coupled with the extraordinarily heavy capital finance required, have put them beyond the capacity of private enterprise. Yet the proper and efficient development of these facilities is vital to the operation of private enterprise in other fields.<sup>110</sup>

Playford clearly stated his rationale for state socialism in this public lecture of 1956. To assist both capital and labour, and despite opposition from his own conservative party and from the private power company and builders, Playford had by then effectively nationalised electricity production and the low-income housing industry in South Australia. 'Public sector action in support of economic growth was marked in this period.'<sup>111</sup>

In Australia, the major infrastructure and public services were provided by the states rather than local or national governments, or by the private sector. At a time when popular attention was focused on the new technological products of private industry, public sector activity was at its most pervasive. Government action (at both state and Commonwealth level) was evident in every sector, in mining and agriculture, building and urban development, and above all, in service industries: transport, water supply, electricity, housing and education.

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<sup>110</sup> T Playford, 'Free enterprise under changing economic conditions', William Queale Memorial Lecture, University of Adelaide, October 1956, p. 18, quoted in S Marsden, *Constructing Playford's city: the South Australian Housing Trust and the transformation of Adelaide, 1936–1966*, PhD thesis, Flinders University of South Australia, 1994, p.310.

<sup>111</sup> S Marsden, *Constructing Playford's city*, p. 215. This chapter (and thesis) provides an extended discussion of that topic.

## ***Water supply***

This government has pushed ahead with all sorts of projects regardless of costs.<sup>112</sup>

Water from the River Murray was crucial to the state's three growth sectors: housing and settlement; agriculture; and secondary industry. Ultimately, five major pipelines were built by the E&WS Department to supply Murray water throughout the state: to the 'Iron Triangle'; the Lower North; the upper South East; and two to Adelaide. The first of them was the government's pledge to build a pipeline from Morgan to Port Pirie and Whyalla for BHP's use, completed in 1944. The E&WS Department completed the Port Augusta–Woomera pipeline in 1949. It was 108 miles in length and drew water from the Morgan–Whyalla pipeline in Port Augusta West.<sup>113</sup> The Whyalla pipeline helped BHP to expand operations and also 'established the practice of bringing water to the development rather than the reverse, because of the overall economics of the undertaking'.<sup>114</sup>

Adelaide was the focus of industrialisation but the halt to public works during the war and postwar growth caused shortfalls in water supply and restrictions were imposed from 1943–54. The E&WS Department recommended constructing new reservoirs in the Adelaide Hills and another Murray pipeline and completed the Mannum–Adelaide pipeline in 1954. This pipeline discharged into the South Para Reservoir (constructed 1948–58) and the River Torrens system of reservoirs at Hope Valley, Millbrook and Kangaroo Creek. In the following year, Adelaide's water consumption increased by 20%. By then, Murray water for rural, domestic, industrial and commercial use was supplied to 6,000 miles of the state's 8,000 miles of water-mains, and 90% of the population depended upon the River's water.<sup>115</sup> Water supplies were disinfected by chlorination but filtration of the turbid river water had to await a later period.

## ***Electricity***

Nationalisation of the electric supply industry was Playford's most controversial act. The Adelaide Electric Supply Company (AESCo), a private company, preferred to import black coal from NSW rather than undertake the costly development of brown coal resources at Leigh Creek in South Australia. Adelaide's electricity needs were met by the Osborne Power Station (opened in 1923) but during World War II Playford suggested erecting a new power station at Port Augusta, powered by Leigh Creek coal, 'as a safeguard against enemy air attack.'<sup>116</sup> AESCo's refusal to see the future value of Leigh Creek coal prompted Playford to introduce the South Australian Electricity Trust Bill in 1945. He also claimed that the AESCo, which had become a monopoly, should be owned by the people of South Australia.<sup>117</sup> AESCo vehemently resisted the Bill, backed by many MPs, and it was not passed. Playford reintroduced

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<sup>112</sup> State Opposition leader O'Halloran, in debate on Waterworks Act Amendment Bill, 1954, quoted in M Hammerton, *Water South Australia. A history of the Engineering and Water Supply Department*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide 1986, pp 229–30.

<sup>113</sup> *Annual Report of the Public Works Dept.* 30 June 1950, SAPP No. 29 Engineering and Water Supply Dept.

<sup>114</sup> *Water resources development 1836–1986*, E&WS, p. 13.

<sup>115</sup> *Water resources development 1836–1986*, p. 13; S Marsden, in *South Australia's heritage*, 1986, p. 125.

<sup>116</sup> Quoted in Linn, Rob, *ETSA The Story of Electricity in South Australia*, ETSA Corporation 1996, p. 57.

<sup>117</sup> Linn, p. 66

the Bill in 1946, threatening to call a double dissolution. It was passed by one vote and the Electricity Trust of South Australia (ETSA) commenced on 1 September 1946.

ETSA retained AESCo staff including the manager but he soon retired and Richard (Dick) Lea became General Manager (Lea died in 1954). ETSA's priority was planning for future needs and by 1952 the electricity sold had more than doubled the 1946 total.<sup>118</sup> A web of stations, substations, transmission lines and transformers was strung across South Australia, supported by the concrete and steel stobie poles introduced by AESCo in 1924. Governor Norrie opened Osborne B Power Station on 4 May 1949 and ETSA announced that it would build a regional station at Port Augusta. The new station was opened by Governor George on 23 July 1954 but was not fully operational until 1957. Power Station 'A' was the first to use Leigh Creek coal as its main fuel. The site at the north of Gulf St Vincent was determined by access to Leigh Creek and the railway system, the demands of the Port Pirie smelters, and proximity to circulating water supplies. Power Station 'B' was built alongside and when opened on 20 July 1960, the whole complex was named after Sir Thomas Playford.<sup>119</sup>

Amongst other tangible outcomes, government-funded infrastructure in the 1940s and 1950s brought a convergence in living standards and in urban form all over Australia. There were marked regional differences within and between the states in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Expanded government involvement produced economies of scale and more uniform provision of infrastructure in rural and urban Australia and 'the new areas of factories and housing opened up by public investment in power generation and public transport differ[ed] little from city to city'. By 1959, 'public ownership and investment' was obliterating 'many of the fine differences between Australian cities. Now that Australian cities have all modern conveniences, they are physically more stereotyped than they have been in the past'.<sup>120</sup>

### *Transport*

'Tis the last tram of Adelaide  
That clanks up the tracks  
All her hundred fair sisters  
Are turned into shacks;  
Where geraniums blossom  
The motorman sat...

(Lines on the extinction of the Adelaide Electrical Tramways System by the MTT.)<sup>121</sup>

This was a time of most dramatic change in transport and transport infrastructure, represented by rapid advance in use of the petrol-driven motor vehicle. Most people walked, rode bikes or caught a bus or a tram in Adelaide until the 1950s but by then public transport was in decline. Total car registrations increased from 100,000 in 1946 to 240,000 in 1956 and public transport passengers fell from 100 million to 60 million in the same time.<sup>122</sup> A Royal Commission in 1952 recommended that the state take

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<sup>118</sup> Linn, p. 77, from ETSA's annual reports.

<sup>119</sup> Linn, p. 80; Austral Archaeology, *Flinders Ranges Heritage Survey*, pp. 2–76 to 2–77. A multi-page article appeared in the *Advertiser* to extol the achievement (Linn, p.125).

<sup>120</sup> Frost & T Dingle, p. 31.

<sup>121</sup> J Bray, quoted in P Pierce, ed, *The Oxford literary guide to Australia*, OUP, Melbourne, 1987, p. 142.

<sup>122</sup> Lester, Firth & Murton, *An insight into the development of western Adelaide*, Western Metropolitan Regional Organization, Glenelg, 1982, p. 96.

over the Municipal Tramways Trust (MTT). A new Board was formed, and in 1958 the MTT ran electric trams for the last time, replacing them with diesel buses and removing all tracks except for the Glenelg line. Trams were phased out during the 1950s in every Australian city except Melbourne.

'The Holden car was the symbol of the new vision for South Australia.'<sup>123</sup> The first mass-produced Australian-made car was completed at Fishermen's Bend (Melbourne) in November 1948. FX Holden bodies were also produced at the older GMH plant at Woodville, South Australia. The Holden cost £675 plus tax, a price beyond most families, but cars became more affordable as wages rose faster than the cost of living. Registrations jumped in 1949 and again in 1950 when petrol rationing ended. By 1951 GMH had produced 50,000 units with orders for almost 100,000.<sup>124</sup> Commercial vehicles also multiplied and began to replace horse-drawn milk vans and bread carts, although Tip Top's stables remained a haunt of North Adelaide's children into the 1960s.

Table 4: New motor vehicle registrations, 1945—59

	Motor cars	Commercial vehicles	Motor cycles
1945	33	526	57
1946	1185	1107	943
1947	3092	2233	1859
1948	5729	2925	3328
1949	9161	4004	4515
1950	14,901	6516	4457
1951	12,806	6369	4962
1952	12,087	6254	2534
1953	11,184	5766	1699
1954	16,092	6189	2217
1955	18,801	6590	2089
1956	15,315	6110	1541
1957	15,334	5481	1436
1958	14,930	5531	1309
1959	15,018	6106	1286

Source: W Vamplew et al, South Australian historical statistics, p. 309.

Heavy trucks also supplanted rail transport in carrying long-distance freight, despite attempts by governments to restrict the competition. 'Most of the change in South Australia's transport infrastructure has occurred in the years since the Second World War, and largely because of it...'. In 1930 South Australia (followed by other states) had imposed restrictive legislation on freight transport by road to preserve the state-railways monopoly. Commonwealth wartime spending to improve arterial roads and the sale of surplus army vehicles after the war tipped the balance towards road haulage, although South Australia did not relax the regulations until 1964.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Kwan, vol. 2, p. 128. General Motors–Holden began full-scale production of the Holden in 1948.

<sup>124</sup> P Donovan, 'Motor cars and freeways', in O'Neil et al, pp. 202–4. See also S Birney, *Australia's own: the history of Holden*, Golden Press, Sydney, 1985.

<sup>125</sup> P Donovan, 'The influence of transport on the development of South Australian country towns', in Denholm, Marsden and Round, pp. 55 (including quotation), 56.

'In a new age of public spending all attention was on building for cars. Some of the most powerful and pervasive agencies were the state's road construction departments (helped by earmarked Commonwealth funds) such as South Australia's Highways Department ...'.<sup>126</sup> The Department of Highways and Local Government had formed in 1927 and grew rapidly during the 1940s and 1950s in step with the expansion of road transport. Strategic requirements in the war had for the first time made roads rather than railways the main priority of both state and Commonwealth governments with a lasting influence on Australia's road network.

The Commonwealth's Allied Works Council supervised the development of arterial roads to support army traffic, sharing construction with state road authorities. The South Australian Highways Department worked jointly to seal the Stuart Highway (Northern Territory) and the Eyre Highway (to Western Australia), two of the three most important arterial roads constructed during World War II. Other country roads deteriorated and in 1947 the Commonwealth provided a grant for them as well as continuing to fund arterial roads. The Highways Department, as in the other states, put huge effort into dealing with 'the backlog of road works from the war period, to cater for ever-growing numbers of vehicles, to link isolated settlements with all-weather roads and to provide higher standards of service for the increasingly heavily trafficked roads'.<sup>127</sup>

Long distance road-making through the hard country typical of South Australia's outback was made possible by 'the arrival of new-type instruments, [four-wheel drive] vehicles, and air support, and ...heavy equipment for the carving of access roads in advance'. The most remarkable road building of this kind was the Gunbarrel Highway, constructed under Len Beadell's direction as the first access road through 'almost a thousand miles of desolate, waterless semi-desert', in western central Australia (South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia).<sup>128</sup>

Uniquely among state road agencies, the Highways Department also developed a long-range planning program to systemically upgrade the main roads in and around metropolitan Adelaide with minimal disruption to urban and industrial development. This was the Metropolitan Adelaide Road Widening Plan adopted in 1947.<sup>129</sup>

Above the huge hidden underground tanks  
Awash with petrol and diesel fuel,  
He rose up as a god in waves of moulded plastic,  
With his three-pronged fork:  
The crowned king of Prospect Road.  
(*Neptune petrol station, circa 1955*)<sup>130</sup>

'The proliferation of the car not only changed the tempo of Australian life, it also created ... a plethora of building types.'<sup>131</sup> The most ubiquitous signs of the postwar age were widened roads and road bridges, traffic lights and parking meters; petrol

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<sup>126</sup> Marsden, *Urban heritage*, p. 38.

<sup>127</sup> 'Special article – History of roads in Australia', ABS, *Year Book Australia 2002*, Canberra 2002, [www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/ABS@.nsf/0/2e904c15091c39a5ca2569de0028b416?OpenDocument](http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/ABS@.nsf/0/2e904c15091c39a5ca2569de0028b416?OpenDocument)

<sup>128</sup> L Beadell, *Too long in the bush*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1965, p. 12 (both quotations).

<sup>129</sup> *Bush track to highway: 200 years of Australian roads*, National Association of State Road Authorities, Sydney 1987, p 61.

<sup>130</sup> J Guess, *Rites of arrival. Poems from the museums of the History Trust of South Australia*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1990, p. 59.

<sup>131</sup> Stropin & Marsden, p. 29.

stations and drive-in shops, theatres and motels; car ports and car parks. One of the first International Style buildings in central Adelaide was the Waterman Building (1956–7), a drive-through service station, bottle shop and office complex.<sup>132</sup> Parking meters were first installed in Adelaide in 1958. The Renmark Distillery Bridge was the first prestressed concrete bridge in South Australia, and was designed by the Highways Department in 1958.<sup>133</sup>

The Blueline opened at West Beach in 1954 as the state's first drive-in theatre. The Marion Metro Twin drive-in opened in 1957 and Port Elliot drive-in opened in 1958. Eventually, more than 14 were built in the suburbs and 10 in country towns but only three (Gepps Cross, Barmera and Murray Bridge) still operate, and only one (Gepps Cross) in Adelaide. The rise of tourism, especially to outback South Australia and the spectacular Flinders Ranges, depended on private car use. Purpose-built motels were modelled on American motels (motor hotels) first provided along Route 66 in the 1930s. Australia's first motel is said to have opened in Tasmania in 1949 but the South Australian Tourist Bureau established a resort near Wilpena Pound in 1945 with a 'chalet-style' motel. Perhaps because it has remained under government control, the Wilpena Pound Motel retains its original design.<sup>134</sup> This fantastic mix of Swiss chalet and American motel set in an Australian wilderness illustrates Davidson and Spearritt's observation that tourism history 'throws into relief, by virtue of its hyper-real quality, certain assumptions of a given period, perhaps more clearly than most social activities'.<sup>135</sup>



Wilpena Pound motel (Postcard: S Marsden collection)

'The rapid growth of population and motor vehicle ownership, the physical expansion of the cities, and the highly mobile lifestyle of the residents, have resulted in rapidly expanding government road budgets to provide a network of arterial roads and suburban streets in urban areas.'<sup>136</sup> The very shape and location of new

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<sup>132</sup> P Donovan, S Marsden & P Stark, 'Review of Register of City of Adelaide items, City of Adelaide Heritage Study', October 1990, Vol. 1, Register assessment report, Waterman Building, 408 King William Street, Adelaide, pp 54.1–3.

<sup>133</sup> Heritage Investigations, Heritage survey of the Murray riverlands, 1983, DC Renmark, item ref no 8.

<sup>134</sup> *Walkabout: Wilpena Pound*, Fairfax, nd, [www.walkabout.com.au/locations/SAWilpenaPound.shtml](http://www.walkabout.com.au/locations/SAWilpenaPound.shtml)

<sup>135</sup> J Davidson & P Spearritt, *Holiday business: tourism in Australia since 1870*, MUP, Carlton, 2000, p. 344.

<sup>136</sup> 'History of roads in Australia', ABS, *Year Book Australia 2002*.

settlement was strongly influenced by mass car use. Train and tram transport had contributed to a radial pattern of urban development that persisted as long as public transport remained dominant (until the early 1950s). With rising car ownership and concomitant road improvements, this pattern was altered in every city and large town. The car accelerated both infill and sprawl, and the contrast between public transport-oriented suburban development and car-dependent development can clearly be seen even within the same councils in metropolitan Adelaide.

Changes in population and technology and industrial expansion brought the most important change in shipping since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Containerisation markedly reduced waterside labour, speeded up loading and introduced much larger vessels, all of which required major changes in port infrastructure. The Harbors Board prepared the Greater Port Adelaide Plan (1950) outlining plans to construct lineal quays and transit sheds and to build housing estates. This was the first plan of its kind and size in Australia and formed the basis of the development of Le Fevre Peninsula for the remainder of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Air traffic during and after the war increased demand for airfields. Trans Australian Airlines began operations in 1946. Airfields were created to service weapons research (Edinburgh, Mallala, Maralinga, Woomera), and regional needs, for example, at Mount Gambier. Two new airports were created in metropolitan Adelaide. RAAF Base, Edinburgh was established on part of the Salisbury munitions factory site. The airstrip was completed in 1954 and opened by the Duke of Edinburgh.<sup>137</sup> Parafield airfield was replaced by a new Adelaide Airport in West Torrens. The land was compulsorily acquired in 1946 and opened for commercial flights in 1955. A memorial hangar housing the plane flown by the Smith brothers from England to Australia in 1919 was opened at the airport in the same year.<sup>138</sup>

Australia's first women's air race culminated in Adelaide in October 1953. The race was won by Mrs Casey, the wife of RG Casey, Minister for External Affairs, who piloted a Fairchild 24 from Moorabbin, Victoria.<sup>139</sup> Maie Casey had learnt flying while living in Canberra in the 1930s and was a founder and patron of the Australian Women Pilots' Association

### ***Architecture, engineering and construction***

The pace was terrific, and the enthusiasm something to be marvelled at. If the state wanted schools in a hurry, who got the job? The Trust. If a hospital is wanted quickly, go to the Trust. Soldier settlement farms on Kangaroo Island, the Trust will do them. Those were exciting days and we loved it.<sup>140</sup>

The important construction of this period was one of three kinds: domestic housing, industrial plants and public infrastructure. By adopting industrial mass-production techniques modernist architecture could provide bigger housing estates, factories and power stations, schools, hospitals and whole towns. The big construction projects were undertaken for state and Commonwealth agencies or for manufacturers.

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<sup>137</sup> The Airfield is described as a complex of considerable historical significance, together with the Salisbury Explosives Factory. P Donovan, *Salisbury heritage survey*, DEP, Adelaide, 1991, p. 326.

<sup>138</sup> Lester, Firth & Murton, p. 136.

<sup>139</sup> *Advertiser* 27 October 2003 (refers to *Advertiser* report 29 October 1953).

<sup>140</sup> SAHT architect Dale Mitchell, quoted in Marsden, *Business, charity and sentiment: the South Australian Housing Trust 1936–1986*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide 1986, p. 218.

Private architects were engaged on this work but those in public employment were also key figures.

Until building controls were lifted, many architects relied on work 'farmed out' by government departments trying to keep pace with demand for public buildings and housing. Wilfred Haslam was the Commonwealth's Director of Works for South Australia, and his responsibilities included the Long Range Weapons project (1947–52) which provided many commissions for local architects.<sup>141</sup> As late as 1957 Haslam advised the RAIA of an acute shortage of professional staff in the Department of Works and sought to engage experienced architects.<sup>142</sup>

The Architect-in-Chief is responsible for the maintenance of all government buildings and for the planning and supervision of new projects involving new buildings for the Education, Hospitals, and Police Departments, and the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Department. This Department is being re-organized and extended to meet increasing demands. The works carried out during the year represented the largest programme ever undertaken.<sup>143</sup>

Engineers, architects and planners in the South Australian public service had enduring impact. Many worked in the Architect-in-Chief's Department, the Architects Section of the South Australian Housing Trust and at E&WS. GG Poole, Resident Engineer for Salisbury Munition Works and Leigh Creek Coalfield (1942–8) was Engineer for Construction from 1947–61. He supervised projects including Uley-Wanilla Pipeline, the water supply for Yorke Peninsula and to Radium Hill, Mannum-Adelaide Pipeline, South Para Reservoir, Loxton Irrigation and South East Drainage Schemes, and Port Augusta-Woomera Pipeline.<sup>144</sup>

The Harbors Board has drawn up a programme of works with the object of first making good deficiencies in the existing port accommodation and then providing for the expansion of industry, trade and commerce over the next 50 years. Proposals are for acquisition of land for various purposes including the development of a garden suburb on Le Fevres Peninsula. Mr Cartledge, Chairman of the Housing Trust, told the committee that 2,500 houses could be erected.<sup>145</sup>

Frederick Andres, Engineer for Development, specialised in planning port developments, and produced the '50 Year Master Plan for Greater Port Adelaide' for the Harbors Board. Andres introduced novel designs when modernising the Port

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<sup>141</sup> Page, pp. 197–8.

<sup>142</sup> July 1957 *Bulletin* of the South Australian Chapter of the RAIA, in Page, p. 205.

<sup>143</sup> SAPP, Annual report, 1951–2, p. 4.

<sup>144</sup> Cumming & Moxham, 1986, p. 152. The Uley-Wanilla scheme was designed to pump water from a fresh water basin north west of Port Lincoln to maintain supplies in the Tod River district and parts of the Franklin Harbour and Cleve districts and to serve a large area near the eastern coastline of Eyre Peninsula. (*SAPP 29 Annual Report of the Public Works Dept. 1951–52*).

<sup>145</sup> SAPP No. 75 Plan for the Development of Port Adelaide (Acquisition of Land), AW Christian, Chairman, p. 4.



Adelaide and Port Pirie waterfronts in 1950 and designed for foreshore improvements at Glenelg, Kingscote, Kingston (SE), and Port Lincoln.<sup>146</sup>

A tee-head jetty was also built at Port Augusta where the boilers and machinery were unloaded for the new power station. Despite the low grade quality of Leigh Creek coal, ETSA engineers designed a highly efficient power station, linked by two transmission lines with the Osborne power stations at Port Adelaide. With its high operating efficiency and cheaper fuel, it became Adelaide's main supplier, with Osborne used only at peak demand. Typically, there was less concern about the impact of the design on Port Augusta. At Power Station 'A' six chimney stacks belched 1500 tonnes of corrosive chemical ash each day, damaging people's health and their homes, furniture and rainwater supplies.<sup>147</sup>

The South Australian Housing Trust had a major role because of the extent of its work and use of mass-production techniques and also because it deliberately transformed the private building industry. The Trust set up its own architectural section and started a House Purchase scheme in 1945 but contracted all of its work to private builders. Geoff Stolz was principal engineer, (Sir) John Overall was Chief Architect and Geoff Shedley (who had designed the Trust's first 'double unit' houses) was Chief Design Architect. Overall also designed the Private Secretary's Cottage in Government House grounds. He formed a partnership with Gavin Walkley in 1949 but in 1951 became the Commonwealth's Chief Architect and Walkley was appointed Head of the School of Architecture at the South Australian School of Mines.

Dale Mitchell migrated from England to join the South Australian Housing Trust Architects Section in 1951 and took on his first task of supervising the erection of more than 1,000 imported timber houses at Gilles Plains at the rate of 48 a month for two years. He then joined the group led by the 'exacting' Geoff Shedley with planner Henry Smith who designed and built Elizabeth Town Centre and Lyell McEwen Hospital.<sup>148</sup> South Australian Housing Trust architects also enjoyed essays in the Modern Movement, with some included in those the Trust offered for sale. Shedley's own house at 12 Royal Avenue, Burnside reflects this preference.

'The decade of 1945–55 was the seminal period for the great advances in building materials and construction methods which were to revolutionise the industry.'<sup>149</sup> Most of the new techniques were from the USA where the economy had benefited rather than suffered from the war. The Pioneers Memorial Hall (1958) at Seacombe Gardens was designed and built by the South Australian Housing Trust using concrete arch frames, a construction method new to South Australia. For the E&WS Department, mechanisation, time-saving systems and the use of new materials and techniques – asbestos pipes, rubber joints, PVC sewer lining, radio telephones and aerial surveys –

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<sup>146</sup> Andres' reports included: Reconstruction of Wharves at Port Adelaide (SAPP 1946 (34), Reconstruction of Port Adelaide Berths SAPP 1948 (34), Plan for Development of Port Adelaide SAPP 1950 (75), Osborne Coal Handling, SAPP 1951 (30), Currie Street Cargo Shed, SAPP 1951 (70), Glenelg Foreshore Improvement, SAPP 1952 (14), Deep Sea port Victoria, SAPP 1952 (35), Kingscote Port Improvement, SAPP 1954 FS (17), Deep Sea Port in south-east, SAPP 1954 SS (33), Bulk Handling of Wheat, SAPP 1955 (5), Port Adelaide Wharf Reconstruction, SAPP 1955 (88), Port Lincoln Harbour Improvements and Bulk Handling Scheme, SAPP 1956–7 (84), Thevenard Bulk Loading Plant, SAPP 1957 (30), Port Pirie Harbour Improvements, SAPP 1957 (51), Reconstruction of wharves at Port Adelaide, SAPP 1946 (34). South Australian Harbors Board, *Planning for the immediate and future development of Port Adelaide*, Govt. Printer, Adelaide 1950.

<sup>147</sup> RJ Anderson, *Solid town the history of Port Augusta*, Anderson, Adelaide, 1988, pp. 187–91.

<sup>148</sup> D Mitchell, interview 17 Mar, 19 April 1982, by S Marsden for SAHT history (summary & transcript, SLSA, SRG 660/1/87).

<sup>149</sup> Page, p. 215.

proved to be the best means of keeping up with the government's demands and dealing with shortages.<sup>150</sup>

This period saw the widest variety of building materials. Traditional masonry work continued with widespread use of Mount Gambier stone; but shortages of bricks and galvanised iron were substituted by timber and cement roof tiles or imported and prefabricated materials; restrictions and poverty meant that materials such as canvas, packing cases and kerosene cans were pressed into service; while modernism and mass-production encouraged the use of manufacturers' fibro (asbestos cement), masonite, aluminium, gyprock, plate glass and strawboard.

Some of these were distinctively South Australian. Solomit's strawboard factory was started at Freeling in 1938 (the first strawboard house at Freeling was built in 1949). In the 1950s and 1960s Solomit SA became a large rural industry producing thousands of strawboard sheets for acoustic ceilings, insulation, and some houses. Solomit erected at least one display house in Adelaide and drew it to the attention of suburban councillors.<sup>151</sup> Playford's concern about South Australian spending on black market and imported cement was translated into a government guarantee for Adelaide Cement Company to build a new kiln at Birkenhead (1953), and this, together with the new South Australian Portland Cement kiln at Angaston, more than doubled the state's cement production.<sup>152</sup>

By 1955 the Australian economy, released from the last wartime controls, had begun to accelerate. There was plenty of work and wider opportunities than South Australian architects had ever experienced before. John Chappel's career as an architect illustrates a familiar trajectory from public to private practice. After war service he was educated as an architect under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Scheme. He was a cadet in the Department of Works in 1949–54 and worked on War Service homes before opening his own practice in 1956, an early commission being the FCA Building on Franklin Street, described as an example of the more innovative architecture of the 1950s.<sup>153</sup>

The impact of architects was greater than in earlier times because of the explosion of construction and because they were far more numerous, promoted architecture outside their own work and were members of influential committees. Some, like JD (Jack) Cheesman, were 'progressives' who began to implement the new architecture after the war, including at the University of Adelaide when a Chair of Architecture was established. The Chair was established in 1956 with Rolf Jensen as Foundation Professor. A new full-time five year course came into operation in 1958. Louis Laybourne Smith was head of the School of Architecture at the South Australian School of Mines (now University of South Australia) for over 40 years until 1951 and was followed by Gavin Walkley.

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<sup>150</sup> Hammerton, p. 233.

<sup>151</sup> J Dallwitz & S Marsden (Heritage Investigations), 'Heritage survey of the Lower Light', DEP, 1983, DC Light: Freeling, Item identification sheet nos 78 (Former Solomit Factory) & 100 (Schuster House). Solomit SA Ltd wrote to Mitcham Council in April 1952 describing a house recently constructed of Solomit in Somers St, Brighton, and inviting council members to inspect it. M Ragless, historical notes from Mitcham Council records, Local History Collection, Mitcham Community Centre. As Mitcham was a separate council to Brighton, this letter suggests that Solomit wrote to all suburban councils with the same offer.

<sup>152</sup> EM Schroder, *I remember, I remember*, Calx Pty Ltd, Adelaide, 1989, pp. 170–173, 185, 190. (He was appointed general manager of Adelaide Cement Co in 1944.)

<sup>153</sup> Page, pp. 202–3, 234.

Cheesman was a member of the large firm of Lawson Cheesman Doley and Partners, and designed houses and flats, churches, power stations and commercial buildings. He was a councillor of the South Australian Institute of Architects (1932–52) and President (1945–47), and Federal President of the Royal Institute of Architects (1948–50). He strongly promoted town planning in talks, papers and on committees. He was a member of government and voluntary committees, including Canberra's Sitting Review Committee, CSIRO's Building Research and Development Advisory Committee, the South Australian Town Planning Committee (1956–67), Adelaide City Council, and the National Trust.<sup>154</sup>

Cheesman and the RAIA also promoted modernist designs by operating a Small Homes Service. Cheesman had set up a non-profit Small Homes Bureau in Adelaide in 1933 and helped the RAIA to re-establish it in 1953 with the support of the *Advertiser*. The service operated from the Timber Development Association premises. Architects prepared designs and specifications for small houses free-of-charge and the service sold the designs for £10 each along with advice on minor alterations and siting. Plans were withdrawn after 20 had been sold to prevent too much repetition. Architect Marjorie Simpson was appointed director of the Small Homes Service in 1956 when there were few other women architects in South Australia, and despite some male protest, she helped to make the service even more successful.<sup>155</sup>

A group of young architects including Robert Dickson, Newell Platten, Keith Neighbour and Colin Schumacher also launched into new designs. In 1949 Dickson took a year off university to build his own house (2 Wandilla Drive, Rostrevor) and one for his mother. The design demonstrated his questioning of formal styling but was not 'modernist' – just a response to site, materials and a limited budget. He needed a permit to build and his house was simple with only one bedroom, but he describes it as 'my own little utopia', and still enjoys living there. After graduation he gained experience working in Europe, then set up practice in Adelaide, one of the first of the postwar practices 'inspired from its inception by modernist ideals'.<sup>156</sup>

Neighbour won the South Australian Architectural Travelling Prize and he and Platten also worked overseas. Both were employed by Lawson, Cheesman, Doley and Partners but Platten formed a partnership with Dickson in 1958 (resuming in 1963). Both Platten and Dickson acknowledge the influence of Jack McConnell. Early modernist designs by Dickson and Platten Architects include the Lee house at Brighton (1958) and the Hurcombe house at Torrens Park (1959). The practice later became renowned for its regional architecture, described as a 'vernacular adaptation of modernism'.<sup>157</sup>

A distinctive minority of houses was 'Modern Movement', an angular design referring to European and American modernism and marked by a low pitched roof, extensive

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<sup>154</sup> M Rumbelow, *Cheesman, Jack Denyer*, Louis Laybourne Smith School Architecture Archive database (summary & series list), University of South Australia, Adelaide, June 2002, [www.unisa.edu.au/archarchive/Database/cheesman/default.htm](http://www.unisa.edu.au/archarchive/Database/cheesman/default.htm) Page, p. 207.

<sup>155</sup> Page, p. 221.

<sup>156</sup> R Hurst, 'An unselfconscious architecture: the work of Robert Dickson', Additions to architectural history, XIXth conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia & New Zealand, Brisbane 2002, p. 1.

<sup>157</sup> C Garnaut, pers. comm. 30 June 2003; Page, p. 204; *Synchronicity*, [www.adelaidefestival.org.au/2002/atkins/synchroniCITY2.pdf](http://www.adelaidefestival.org.au/2002/atkins/synchroniCITY2.pdf) R Dickson, pers comm., talk and exhibition at RAIA (SA) 'Conversation + exhibition', Adelaide, 14 Aug 2003 (where plans for the Lee and Hurcombe houses were also exhibited, from the University of South Australia Architecture Archive); final quotation, *Heritage South Australia Newsletter* No 23, July 2003, p. 4.

use of glass and stained timber. It used mass-produced industrial materials: a timber frame construction, steel window frames and a metal or asbestos decking skillion roof. An early Modern Movement house in South Australia is the heritage-listed Wright House at 3 Meadowvale Road, Springfield (1949), designed by Russell Ellis. It is in excellent condition and considered to be a very good example of functionalist work.<sup>158</sup>

The Modern Movement was already half a century old in Europe, where it was developed as a deliberately non-historical and functional architecture in which form was adapted to the new technological culture. This aesthetic was also expressed by the use of standardised, inexpensive industrial materials: asbestos cement sheeting, aluminium window frames and pre-cast concrete blocks. By the 1950s modernism had merged with an International style associated with west coast USA, as interpreted by Australian architects.

Houses in this style were either one-off constructions by owner-builders or designed by an architect for one owner, and so were usually built in prosperous suburbs, in natural settings in the Adelaide Hills or at the beach. Modern houses built by architects for their own use included Malcolm Doley's house, at 5 The Crescent Marryatville (1956) that made use of organic materials in a natural creek setting; Neighbour house, 21 Kays Road, Torrens Park (1958) that made direct use of materials, concrete block, timber asbestos roofing, straw ceilings, and influenced a new Adelaide Hills vernacular domestic style.

European migration provided another point of entry for the Modern Movement to Australia. Often starkly modern houses were built by newly arrived immigrants, usually from northern Europe, who had seen and understood the movement's theories in their home countries of origin. A Latvian builder designed 67 Barretts Road, Panorama (1950); Alexandra Mokwinska designed a striking house at 21 McKenna Street, Kensington Park (1956); and there is another at 18 Orient Road, Kensington Park (1957).<sup>159</sup> Mrs Mokwinska, a Russian architectural designer, argued her case with Burnside Council building inspectors, who were persuaded by her professionalism and photographs of subtropical buildings with flat roofs. She discovered 'there were many, many admirers ... people standing, watching in the street as the house was built'.<sup>160</sup>

Robin Boyd in Melbourne was one of the leading advocates for modern architecture. Gavin Walkley's house (1956) at 26 Palmer Place, North Adelaide is Boyd's only work in South Australia and demonstrates the rationalisations required to sustain the functionalist philosophy. (It is on the RNE.)

Despite the progressive architects, modernism did not have wide impact on housing design in South Australia. Even in England, postwar modernism did not begin to be fully exerted until the early 1950s. Rationing and shortages of building materials continued for some years after World War II and building restrictions were not lifted in South Australia until 1953. They limited the area of a new house to 1,200 square feet (111.48 square metres) for a timber house and 1,250 square feet for brick. Additions were restricted to a cost of £300. Introduction of the 40 hour working week and cost rises in building materials raised prices and added another incentive to restrict size.

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<sup>158</sup> M Queale, email, 15 December 2003.

<sup>159</sup> Mokwinska's house, see also RAI A Register & Burnside Heritage Survey.

<sup>160</sup> A Marsden & J Dallwitz (Heritage Investigations), *Burnside Heritage Survey*, DEP 1985, p. 45.

'In other words the possibility of doing anything architecturally worthwhile was almost nil.'<sup>161</sup>

'All too frequently today we are faced with the problem of erecting a minimum economical area to be extended later as finances permit, to more adequate accommodation.'<sup>162</sup> No-nonsense functionalism or 'austerity' also challenged architects. One approach was to build in stages with stage one completed within the set limit. (Later additions have effaced many of the early postwar designs). Another approach was to maximise the plan's efficiency by combining living and dining rooms, reducing ceiling heights to nine feet (2745 mm), and abandoning verandahs.<sup>163</sup>

The 'austerity' house featured a modest porch with a flat concrete roof, a hipped main roof, narrow eaves and a small frontage. Steel frame casement windows were common. They often had a rear lean-to but this typical Australian addition disappeared after the austerity era. The 'Waterfall Austerity' was a striking variation, usually owner-built of sawn or random stone, cinder block or home-made cement bricks with a rendered finish. Its main features were rounded corners with curved windows, a cast concrete canopy over porches and 'porthole' windows. The style was popular in 1945–55 until better materials became available and tastes changed.<sup>164</sup>

After restrictions were lifted and materials became more plentiful, house sizes expanded and designs became more varied, but the simple lines and open spaces of modernist buildings were usually eschewed for greater decoration and additional rooms. Most postwar houses had only two bedrooms but in the late 1950s three bedrooms became prevalent and room sizes were expanded. Houses gained more elaborate facades, using cream brick or tuck-pointed stone, wider eaves and larger windows. The family's purchase of a car was reflected in designs with garages and carports under the main roof.

Mr Sumner built a house at 5 Regency Road, Kilkenny (1956) that displays all the features of 'Moderne' in Adelaide – white painted rendered brick, metal window frames, a curve to one projecting room, flat roof, parapet wall, port holes, long thin vertical window, and hoods over the windows. A house at 20 Oaklands Road, Somerton Park (1951) was designed and built by the owner WH Lambert in a style transitional between pre-war art deco and the Modern Movement. 'As the work of an untrained designer, the building stands out amongst the generally conservative housing architecture in Adelaide during that period'.<sup>165</sup>

Most of Adelaide's houses remained traditional in design and function. The main changes were in building materials and methods of construction, especially on Adelaide's difficult soils, although it took a long time for changes to be made to the *Building Act* in response to the new techniques and materials. Most important was

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<sup>161</sup> Page, pp. 197, 208–209.

<sup>162</sup> *Small Homes Service of South Australia Inc*, booklet, AL Cadby, c1955, p. 14 (Louis Laybourne Smith School of Architecture and Design Archive, University of South Australia).

<sup>163</sup> P Cuffley, *Australian houses of the Forties and Fifties*, Five Mile Press, Knoxfield, Victoria, 1993, pp. 73–4.

<sup>164</sup> JN Persse, DM Rose, *House styles in Adelaide – a pictorial history*, The Australian Institute of Valuers, Adelaide, nd, pp. 72, 74, 80.

<sup>165</sup> A Holt, *The vanishing sands*, City of Brighton, Adelaide, 1991, p. 184. This house was recommended for State Heritage listing in the Brighton Heritage Survey (1991).

the development of the brick veneer house, which appeared 'in a multitude of designs all over Adelaide's outer suburbs'.<sup>166</sup>

### *Housing*

We had to ... make bricks, concrete bricks, because you couldn't get bricks [after the war]... and the club had a brick-making machine that you hired ... They had to be kept wet for so many days afterwards and I would ride my bike down from Clarence Park and water them while Colin was at work, and the man next door said, 'Don't you know there's water restrictions on?' and I said to him, 'That's for gardens, not for brick-making' ...<sup>167</sup>

Few new houses were built during the Depression or the War and this hiatus contributed to a housing shortage lasting a decade afterwards. Many South Australians had long waited to get their own homes but restrictions retained after 1945 further delayed their hopes. The shortage was exacerbated by rapid population growth from immigration and the high birth rates of the 'baby boom'. Demand was too great for the private building industry to cope and so Commonwealth and state governments took on responsibility for mass housing programs and also assisted private building.

From 1946 the South Australian Housing Trust was reconstructed and enlarged as a major developmental body, supplying housing for a range of purposes in great quantities and across the state. It was geared for large-scale construction at a time of severe shortages and high demand. During the 1950s the South Australian Housing Trust was largely responsible for extending both home ownership and public (rental) housing, overcoming housing backlogs as well as coping with postwar immigration and urbanisation. Production reached 4,127 houses in one year (1953), an all-time record.<sup>168</sup>

The South Australian Housing Trust built only rental housing until 1946 but Playford recognised that many buyers needed help and provided funds for the Trust to build cheap houses for sale.<sup>169</sup> The first was built in Renmark in 1946 and the first suburban sales houses were built in the same year at Hove (Brighton). Each house in the intact group of five standing in Shepherd Street, Hove, has a different design, to avoid any suggestion of mass-housing homogeneity. The range of housing types supplied by the South Australian Housing Trust in Adelaide contrasted with the limited designs of those erected in rural South Australia.

Prefabricated housing has a history as long as British settlement in Australia but postwar need brought its use to a peak. In 1948 South Australian Housing Trust contractor Frank Marshall opened a prefabrication factory and began to build 500 timber-framed partly prefabricated houses at Mitcham. In 1950–54 the South Australian Housing Trust imported 3,832 prefabricated timber houses from Britain and Germany. The first were let at Clearview but all were eventually sold.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Persse, p. 87.

<sup>167</sup> Mrs Jean De Laine, interviewed by Mandy Paul (South Australian Home Builders' Club Project), *Word of mouth* winter 2002, p 16.

<sup>168</sup> W Bromell, *Chronological history of the South Australian Trust, 1936–99*, SAHT, 1999  
[www.housingtrust.sa.gov.au/resources/SAHT\\_Chronological\\_History.pdf](http://www.housingtrust.sa.gov.au/resources/SAHT_Chronological_History.pdf)

<sup>169</sup> In 1956, in order to help maintain the high volume of home building Playford provided an additional £500,000 advance to the SAHT. SAPD, 8 May 1956, p 33.

<sup>170</sup> Marsden, *Business, charity and sentiment*, p. 108.

Frank and Teresa McDonnell rented and later bought one of a group erected by the German contractor Wender and Duerholt on Morphett Road, Dover Gardens. The house stood on blocks and had Baltic pine walls, five small rooms and two power points. 'They came out in kit form – they were austere, there was no tiling, no outside lights ... But we were very lucky to get one, to get accommodation was almost impossible ... to people back then this was a castle.' They raised six children in 'Rose Cottage', gradually transforming it. A plaque is placed there to honour its German building workers.<sup>171</sup> Prefabricated houses were also imported privately: Swiss settler Max Schleuniger imported one from Switzerland to replicate his homeland's architecture in Adelaide, completing the effect with a fir tree planted in the front garden.<sup>172</sup>



Fibro house at Blackwood (Photo: S Marsden, 2003)

Medium density housing (mainly flats) became more common in this period although it was not popular with Playford. John Chappel designed several modern flats considered to be of merit by other architects. 'Parkview' on South Terrace, Adelaide (1950–9) was the first postwar flat building and foreshadowed the later development of parkland facing properties; the flats at Torrens and Cross Street, Lockleys (c1957) were Adelaide's first separately owned apartments; and 'Mount Flats' at Dryden Street/Glynburn Road, Beaumont (1958) brought together the ideals of progressive architects and used off-site prefabrication of standardised components. The first South Australian Housing Trust flats (two storeyed) were also built in the early 1950s. Stow Court, Fullarton Road was awarded a RAlA merit in 1950, its design also reflecting the Trust's employment of immigrant English architects after the war. Another intact group of 1950s South Australian Housing Trust flats are on Portrush Road, Glenside (named 'Barwell' after Board member Sir Henry Barwell).

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<sup>171</sup> *Advertiser* 27 March 2003. Marion Council plans to list the house on its heritage register.

<sup>172</sup> See photograph, Walsh, p. 224.



Fibro houses at Kapunda (Photo: S Marsden, 2003)

The South Australian Housing Trust avoided parts of Adelaide where development costs were too high (for example on hilly ground) or were choice areas for private subdivision. Mitcham displays these social differences. Flat areas were built over by public housing authorities but on the district's beautiful rising ground most subdivisions and house sales were by companies or individuals. Adelaide Co-op Building Society subdivided 'Nunyara' at Belair in 1947. In 1949 nineteen acres were subdivided at Netherby – and the largest mulberry tree in South Australia was removed.<sup>173</sup> The entire Hills face came under subdivision pressure – at Belair, Blackwood and Eden Hills and within Burnside Council, where Stonyfell's Magill vineyard was subdivided in 1955–58.<sup>174</sup> Hills face quarries also proceeded at full blast, and the visible impact of housing and construction reinforced calls for town planning controls, which Playford resisted.

The Commonwealth Government also helped home purchasers through the Department of Housing – War Service Homes Branch, which 'not only provided finance...but also dictated the acceptable terms and specifications of the houses'.<sup>175</sup> War Service Homes were built to 39 basic floor plans but were similar to South Australian Housing Trust houses and to conventional houses supplied by private builders.

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<sup>173</sup> M Ragless, 'Mitcham district 1946–1959 chronology', Local History Collection, Mitcham Community Centre.

<sup>174</sup> Bishop, p. 86.

<sup>175</sup> Persse, p. 83



## Building settlements, towns and cities

Testing ranges have been established at Woomera, which is approximately 280 miles north of Adelaide. A township, together with modern amenities such as hospital, school, kindergarten, community store, swimming pool, and all sporting facilities, has been built at Woomera to accommodate the staff and their families. The population is approximately 5,300.<sup>176</sup>

This was the last and peak phase of settlement building by government in the state's history. South Australian (and other state) governments had traditionally initiated or supported new settlements but the early postwar projects were much larger in scale and also involved Commonwealth support. New government settlements outside Adelaide were Woomera, Maralinga, Radium Hill, Leigh Creek, Loxton Irrigation Settlement and Parndana.<sup>177</sup> Government's most enduring and extensive impact was the infilling and extension of metropolitan Adelaide (including Elizabeth) and the enlargement of the state's established secondary towns.

### *Special-purpose towns*

Governments assumed total responsibility for most of the new towns, in contrast to previous periods. Another important difference was that they were special-purpose towns. Woomera was started from scratch in the arid north-west, built to service rocket testing for the British Government. Woomera Village was created for the Long Range Weapons project as a self-contained support facility, and was designed by architects of the Commonwealth Department of Works and Housing in Melbourne. The village was Australia's first and most remarkable postwar new town. 'The sophisticated plan was underpinned by the dominant international planning of the era, the neighbourhood unit ... [creating] a model residential environment amidst a "rolling waste of red dust, saltbush and gibbers"'. Housing was assigned according to marital status and rank: single people in quarters near messes and married staff in rented houses or flats. Temporary dwellings were brought from Port Pirie followed by prefabricated English buildings. Locally-made brick houses were added in 1949–54. Neither the siting nor the design of houses suited the hot environment but South Australian Housing Trust flats of the late 1950s had verandahs and were angled for the sun.<sup>178</sup>

Woomera has survived the loss of its main purpose, unlike the villages of Emu Field, Maralinga, Radium Hill and Leigh Creek. The British Government used Maralinga in north-western South Australia as a permanent test site following atomic tests at Montebello and Emu Field (*see also Section 7*). Preparations were underway by 1956 with construction of a village and an airstrip. In this arid region, the large airfield was also an important rainwater collection point. Maralinga village has since been cleared except for the airstrip, the hospital building, some huts, foundations, tanks, swimming pool remnants and roads. Modern structures include those used in the 1990s cleanup.<sup>179</sup> The site now belongs to the Maralinga Tjarutja people. (Emu Field Village Site and Range and Maralinga Village and Forward Area are on the RNE.)

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<sup>176</sup> Commonwealth Bureau of Census & Statistics, *Year Book Australia 1966*, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1966, p. 1062

<sup>177</sup> Leigh Creek, Maralinga and Radium Hill have since been cleared or removed, in itself reflecting their existence as solely government towns.

<sup>178</sup> C Garnaut, 'The design of Woomera Village for the Long Range Weapons Project', *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no 30, 2002, pp. 5–23.

<sup>179</sup> RNE, Maralinga Village and Forward Area, Cook, SA, p. 2; Cross, p. 30.

Radium Hill was situated in desolate country 460 km northeast of Adelaide. As at Woomera and Maralinga, all facilities, workers, water and power had to be carried in. A township for 1,100 people was built by a South Australian Housing Trust contractor, with water piped from Broken Hill. The township lasted only as long as the mine, closing in 1961. Most of the settlement was removed except for some industrial structures, a memorial – and radiation warning signs. The South Australian Housing Trust moved the buildings as far as Mount Gambier and Coober Pedy.

ETSA started the coal town of Leigh Creek in 1946, erecting a school, 16 houses, four buildings bought from the Commonwealth Disposal Commission, a dormitory block for single women, and a laundry. The school was completed in time for first term in 1947. The town was the first outside Adelaide served with a sewerage system and Arroona Dam was built in 1954 to supply water. These facilities could not outweigh the economic benefits of the underlying coal and the town was later replaced by another built further south (occupied in 1980–81). The old town was sold at auction – houses, police station, school and morgue – and the buildings were removed to other places.<sup>180</sup>

### ***Industrial towns***

Apart from these special towns, government's role in developing rural centres differed from earlier phases because in the 1940s and 1950s, rather than surveying a large number of new settlements, it focused public works on larger centres where industrial work was expanding. These included Whyalla, Port Pirie, Port Augusta, Mount Gambier, Millicent, Angaston and Ardrossan.<sup>181</sup> Other services (such as South Australian Housing Trust housing) were later supplied to moderate-sized towns. The focus on South Australia's main towns nearly trebled the non-metropolitan urban population while governments' agricultural settlement schemes helped to maintain the rural population. Between 1947 and 1966, people counted in urban areas outside Adelaide multiplied from 65,911 to 177,380, while rural numbers increased slightly from 196,007 to 200,065.<sup>182</sup>

The Commonwealth Railways Workshops and construction of the Power Station brought many people to Port Augusta. In 1951 the South Australian Housing Trust supplied houses for the first 300 ETSA employees, and from 1953 built almost 90 houses a year. In 1947 the town's population was 4,566; by 1959 it had doubled.<sup>183</sup> From 1940 Whyalla was transformed from 'a factory in the desert' into a 'boom city built on money and the muscle of many Australians and even more European migrants'. The population grew from 7,500 in 1946 to nearly 14,000 in 1961 (when Whyalla was proclaimed a city) to 22,000 by 1965.<sup>184</sup> Most houses were built through BHP's Employee's Building Scheme or by the South Australian Housing Trust which provided its first country houses there in 1941. Two good examples of regional modernism in

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<sup>180</sup> Linn, *passim*; N Klassen, in O'Neil et al, p. 147; *Austral Archaeology*, p. 1–53.

<sup>181</sup> S Marsden, 'The role of government in the formation of country towns in South Australia', in AF Denholm, S Marsden & K Round eds, *Terowie workshop: exploring the history of South Australian country towns*, University of Adelaide, 1991, p. 51.

<sup>182</sup> Marsden, *Business, charity and sentiment*, p. 189.

<sup>183</sup> Marsden, *Business, charity and sentiment*, pp. 202, 204; D Harris, *A geography of South Australia*, Whitcombe & Tombs, Melbourne, 1961, 1971, p. 49.

<sup>184</sup> Flinders Ranges Research, *Whyalla, city of steel*, 2001, viewed Nov 2003, no longer valid, including quotation, [members.ozemail.com.au/~fliranre/whyalla.htm](http://members.ozemail.com.au/~fliranre/whyalla.htm)

buildings at Whyalla are the streamlined 1940s Court House and the crème brick Hotel Bayview.

At Mount Gambier, the centre of the state's forestry industry, the South Australian Housing Trust built 100 houses a year between 1952–62, mainly at Gambier East, 'including the suburb of Grantville, which one [town] Councillor had insisted should properly be named "Trustville"'.<sup>185</sup>

### ***Soldier settlements***

Padthaway (South East) and Parndana (Kangaroo Island) were the only towns created by government that were of a traditional type, formed to support new farming communities. Loxton Irrigation Scheme, South Australia's largest agricultural settlement did not create a new town because Loxton already existed nearby, but developmental work was substantial. River Murray works, culminating with the Hume Dam and the Goolwa Barrages, had convinced the South Australian Government that its quota of water was assured, allowing both urban use (through pipelines) and an expansion of irrigation. This was concentrated within the wide river loop at Loxton, Loveday and Cooltong.

Around 334 new holdings were created by 1955, with more than 8,000 acres developed for orchards and vineyards. These new settlement schemes were more successful than those following World War I because they were based on better technical knowledge. 'Settlers were selected more carefully, market prospects for crops were investigated and surveys of blocks and plantings were carried out on a micro-scale so that every variation of soil and slope was taken into account to facilitate water or frost drainage.'<sup>186</sup>

The Commonwealth played a greater part in soldier settlement after World War II, after entering into agreements with each state in 1944. The Rural Reconstruction Commission closely coordinated state efforts. Under the *War Service Land Settlement Agreement Act 1945*, the South Australian Government acted as principal in land settlement but as agents for the Commonwealth in repatriation. This allowed South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania to draw on Commonwealth finance for soldier settlement schemes.<sup>187</sup> The E&WS Department carried out construction work on the Loxton Irrigation Scheme, to provide an irrigable area of about 7,000 acres for more than 200 ex-servicemen.<sup>188</sup>

Much of the hard work was done by the applicants. Most successful applicants for Loxton applied in the first four years after the war. The first was John Borg, who applied in 1945 and was allocated a property in 1952, and the last was Richard Blaschek in 1954. They were interviewed by the South Australian Government's Central Classification Committee and men with little experience were sent on a period of training. Women could not apply in their own right but wives' backgrounds played an important part in men's success. Several had been members of the WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Airforce) or the Women's Land Army. Once the E&WS began work on the site, many applicants were asked if they were willing to accept employment at Loxton, Kangaroo Island or the South East, to assist in the foundation

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<sup>185</sup> Marsden, *Business, charity and sentiment*, p. 210.

<sup>186</sup> M Williams, *The making of the South Australian landscape*, Academic Press, London & New York, 1974, pp. 256, 257 (quotation).

<sup>187</sup> J Nunn, *Soldier settlers*, Investigator Press, Hawthorndene, 1981, p. 14; *Heritage of the Upper North*, p. 42.

<sup>188</sup> SAPP No. 29, *Annual Report of the Public Works Dept* 30 June 1950.

work.<sup>189</sup> A small memorial (fabricated from pipe) frames the view of an apricot tree preserved from the first plantings at the Loxton settlement.

The Upper Murray Ex-Servicemen's Land Settlement Association was formed in 1947, to 'expedite the settlement of Ex-servicemen on the land', and to 'assist any move to place Ex-servicemen on the land on a footing of security and with reasonable likelihood of success'. It was formed because men were expected to work on the preparation of the land, away from their families, with no guarantee of getting a block, and it was concerned to 'hasten land settlement'. The names of the first 55 men to be allocated land at Loxton were announced on 24 June 1948 and were described in the *Murray Pioneer* as 'the first soldier settlers of World War II' to be settled on irrigation properties in South Australia.<sup>190</sup>

Kangaroo Island had long frustrated attempts at closer agricultural settlement because of its isolation, dense scrub and trace element-deficient soils.<sup>191</sup> The Department of Agriculture established an experimental block on the island in 1939, followed by a survey of Crown Lands. Playford raised the possibility of settling up to 250 ex-servicemen and in 1946 the Parliamentary Committee on Land Settlement reported that Kangaroo Island Crown lands provided 'reasonably good prospects of successful development and settlement'. The Land Development Executive (LDE) was directed to prepare a scheme for Commonwealth approval under War Service Land Settlement.<sup>192</sup>

The scheme was approved in 1947 when work started on one of the largest schemes in Australia. Development work on 260,000 acres of scrub – nearly doubling the island's agricultural land – was directed by the LDE in 1947–54. Operational headquarters was at a site now called the Sir Cecil Hincks Reserve (named after the South Australian Minister of Lands). Ex-servicemen chosen as settlers supplied the labour to clear, plough and seed, using massive Majestic ploughs towed by tractors. Families began to arrive in March 1948, occupying huts brought from the Loveday Internment Camp, and began to move onto their farms in 1951. A total of 174 families came to live in the area, almost doubling the island's population by 1954.<sup>193</sup> The town of Parndana ('Place of little gums') was established to service the new farming community.

### ***Adelaide and Elizabeth***

Postwar suburbanisation took place without formal planning controls, except for the limited powers of the *Building Act, 1923* and the *Town Planning Act, 1929*. Much was made of this by planners and architects – who formed a Town Planning Institute in 1948 – and by later historians but as others have noted, 'public policy in the broad sense still had a profound effect on the growth of Adelaide .... through the actions of government or semi-government departments concerned with industrial

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<sup>189</sup> K George, *A place of their own, the men and women of War Service Land Settlement at Loxton after the Second World War*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1999, pp. 133, 138, 149, 153; & K George, 'Parties in a street with no name. Loxton soldier settlers and the development of a new community', paper presented at 12<sup>th</sup> State History Conference, Renmark, May 2003.

<sup>190</sup> George, pp 156–157.

<sup>191</sup> Heritage Investigations & Historical Consultants, *Heritage of Kangaroo Island*, Dept of Environment & Planning, Adelaide 1991, np.

<sup>192</sup> Nunn, pp. 14–15.

<sup>193</sup> *Heritage of Kangaroo Island*, np (1946–present, and caption).

development, public housing and transportation'.<sup>194</sup> Local government had little power to regulate the location of industry or even the calibre of public housing, as broad state interests over-rode those of local residents. It also means that many of the suburbs built between 1945 and the introduction of planning in 1962 demonstrate not only an 'austerity' style but also a mix of domestic, commercial and industrial landuses.



Adelaide circa 1960 (S Marsden collection)

Playford deliberately delayed re-introducing formal town planning in order to maintain the powerful but informal role of the South Australian Housing Trust as a state developer and *de facto* metropolitan planner. In the years following World War II, governments like Playford's saw planning as encompassing both suburban design and arranging state and national resources to provide for 'a rising national income and improved standards of human life'. Elizabeth epitomised both kinds of planning; as a new town design and as an integral part of the South Australian Housing Trust's program of large-scale urban and industrial development.<sup>195</sup>

The northern Adelaide Plain was an obvious choice for large-scale public housing, and Playford decided that the South Australian Housing Trust should build a satellite town.<sup>196</sup> The site had road and rail links with Adelaide and employment at the adjoining WRE. In 1949 the South Australian Housing Trust bought 1,620 hectares and began to design a town, initially for 25,000 people. The design was based on the

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<sup>194</sup> A Hutchings & R Bunker, eds, *With conscious purpose: a history of town planning in South Australia*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1986, p. 86.

<sup>195</sup> Marsden, thesis, *passim* and conclusion, pp. 486–7; Marsden, 'Why Elizabeth?', p. 137 (quotation).

<sup>196</sup> S Marsden, 'Why Elizabeth? The planning and construction of South Australia's new town 1950–1965', in R Freestone ed, *The Australian Planner*, University of NSW, 1993.

British new town neighbourhood concept and each neighbourhood had approximately 1,000 houses with a retail centre and schools.

Attempting (without much success) to create social mix, the South Australian Housing Trust also supplied a range of housing types and tenures. The town was also unique amongst postwar suburban developments for its lavish open space, thousands of planted trees (from the Trust's nursery established in 1955), sewerage connections from the start and underground power lines. 'The town centre formed a model for Adelaide's later regional shopping centres with its department store, supermarket and shopping mall surrounded by large areas of off-street parking.'<sup>197</sup>

Construction of the first neighbourhood of Elizabeth South started in 1954 and the Goodman Road shops were opened. The first houses were occupied in 1955 and on 16 November the Premier named the town Elizabeth, for the Queen. When he stood on the reserve (now called Playford Gardens) to inaugurate Elizabeth, 'the only physical manifestation of the proposed town was the skeleton of Elizabeth South'. The first factory built by the South Australian Housing Trust (Pinnock Manufacturing Co Ltd) opened in 1957, also at Elizabeth South.<sup>198</sup>

Manufacturing was restricted to two industrial areas on the western side of Elizabeth, but the GMH requirements increased the area. Elizabeth's later problems stemmed from its single-purpose industrial role but its design 'was long held up as an example to other public housing authorities throughout Australia, and as an illustration of the general virtues of comprehensive town planning compared with the evils of uncontrolled suburban sprawl.'<sup>199</sup>

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## Politics and government

Afterwards Chifley wryly quipped that his government fell because people who could not afford a bus ticket when Labor came to office were now up in arms about petrol rationing.<sup>200</sup>

### *Expanding the Commonwealth*

Playford declared in 1949 that Federation had been intended to give Australians new rights as national citizens, not to take away their rights as citizens of the individual colonies. He repeated Deakin's early prediction that 'The power of the purse will bring the states to the heel of the Commonwealth Government.' The Commonwealth had assumed entire responsibility for collecting income tax during the war. This was confirmed in 1946 and federal grants-in-aid were increased in their place. Income tax authority confirmed the Commonwealth's supremacy over the states and established the present system of federal-state financial relations. Playford argued in 1949 that the Commonwealth had gained 'complete sovereignty over the states'.<sup>201</sup> The fall of Ben Chifley's Labor government in 1949 made little difference to

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<sup>197</sup> Hutchings & Bunker, p. 87.

<sup>198</sup> Danvers Architects, *City of Elizabeth heritage survey*, Adelaide 1997, pp. 98–100 (quotation): the report proposes an Elizabeth South Historic Conservation Zone.

<sup>199</sup> Hutchings & Bunker, p. 87.

<sup>200</sup> R McMullin, *The light on the hill. The Australian Labor Party 1891–1991*, OUP, Melbourne, 1991, p. 255.

<sup>201</sup> T Playford, 'Case for restoring the balance of the federal system' (1949), quoted in D Nicholas, *The Pacemaker: the Playford Story*, Brolga Books, Adelaide, 1969, pp 114, 115.

this trend, and the states made increasing appeals for assistance to Robert Menzies' Liberal coalition government (1949–66).<sup>202</sup>

The Commonwealth's growing powers were evident elsewhere. A constitutional amendment in 1946 allowed Parliament to make laws relating to widows' pensions, unemployment, medical benefits and family allowances, and the Commonwealth soon became as important as the states in social security and public health. Commonwealth funding for free treatment in public hospital wards was introduced in 1946, and federal-state anti-tuberculosis and anti-poliomyelitis immunisation programs in 1948 and 1956 reduced the incidence of illness due to those epidemic diseases.

Responsibility for migration was shared. The Commonwealth had controlled non-British immigration since 1901 but held joint responsibility with state governments for settlement and welfare services and for British immigration until 1982. The states administered assisted British migration during its peak (1947–70), a history obscured by the Commonwealth's role in European migration after World War II.

During World War II, 'the Commonwealth mobilised national resources for total war, and garnered to itself sweeping powers. Besides recruitment it regulated civilian occupations, primary and secondary industry and prices'.<sup>203</sup> Commonwealth controls were only gradually relinquished and demobilisation was not completed until 1947. Despite the fall of Singapore in 1942 and the withdrawal of British military power from the Far East, Australia's postwar military campaigns supported the British Commonwealth in Asia. Australians served with the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) in Japan in 1945–51 and Prime Minister Menzies committed troops to the Commonwealth in opposition to the spread of communism. Many BCOF troops joined the United Nations force organised to repel the North Korean attack on South Korea. The Korean War lasted from 1950–53 and South Australia's military trained at Woodside Army Camp. When communist revolt also broke out in newly-independent Malaya, the RAAF was involved in the Commonwealth campaign from 1950 and ground troops from 1955–62.

The Department of Post-War Reconstruction encompassed secondary industry, rehabilitation of ex-servicemen and War Service land settlement, as well as planning – the Commonwealth Housing Commission, the Rural Reconstruction Commission, the Secondary Industries Commission, and the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme – all of which had great impact. The Commonwealth government granted car manufacturing rights to General Motors Holden, together with financial inducements and a high tariff, leading directly to production of the Holden car in 1948 and to car manufacture by other companies.

The Playford Government's most celebrated development works – the pipelines and reservoirs that supplied River Murray water for the state's urban, industrial and agricultural development – were made possible by Commonwealth support for river works proposed in the Murray Waters Agreement, ratified in 1915. Key features were construction of the locks and barrages as well as a storage reservoir on the upper Murray. The Hume Dam was completed in 1936 and Goolwa Barrages in 1940.

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<sup>202</sup> Menzies was knighted in 1963.

<sup>203</sup> S Marsden, 'The legacy of federation, 1901 onwards', in SG Foster, S Marsden and R Russell, *Federation: the guide to records*, Australian Archives, 1998, p 183. This section on Commonwealth-state relations is based on that chapter, pp 183–186.

The Commonwealth's War Service Homes Commission increased housing construction and funding, contributing to Adelaide's suburbanisation, while the War Service Land Settlement Scheme initiated agricultural settlement at Loxton and Parndana (Kangaroo Island). The Commonwealth also helped expand housing by recruiting immigrant tradesmen and subsidising the import of prefabricated dwellings.<sup>204</sup> The Commonwealth's defence responsibilities had tangible effect in South Australia at Salisbury, Woomera and Maralinga.

In 1951 there were year-long celebrations for the Commonwealth of Australia Jubilee. A pageant was held in Adelaide and a jubilee exhibition train toured 66 towns.

### ***Governing Playford's South Australia***

Growing world-wide prosperity in the 1950s meant that Australian politicians simply had to ride the wave of inflowing capital and population. Playford's success was in capturing, for a period, a disproportionate share of Australia's industrial growth and overseas immigration.<sup>205</sup>

Under Sir Thomas Playford's direction, public agencies helped to maintain the advantages he used to draw investment to South Australia: lower wages, cheaper land and housing and some lower taxes than in NSW and Victoria, and stable industrial relations. This policy of offering inducements to investors to manufacture in South Australia became nationally known as Playfordism.<sup>206</sup> Playford was so committed to the state's rapid development that he was indifferent to whether it was done by private or state enterprise, just as long as the task was done quickly and efficiently.

The popular perception that Playford alone was the government was close to the truth. He kept Cabinet small and formed an alliance in Parliament with Labor's Opposition leader MR (Mick) O'Halloran (1949–60). Playford did not have a premier's department but developed instead a group of 'able and loyal public servants, dedicated to his prime aim of industrial development, and these became a quasi-cabinet'. He added advisors from business 'and with both groups his highly personalized decision-making and administrative style allowed him to utilize them to the full'.<sup>207</sup>

One of the most influential of these public servants was Alex Ramsay, whom Playford considered a 'brilliant find' and appointed General Manager of the South Australian Housing Trust in 1949 at the age of 33. With the support of the Trust's chairman, JP Cartledge, and the premier, Ramsay built the Trust into a 'big show'. Ramsay's South Australian Housing Trust also 'reflected Playford's style of administration – informal, accessible and cost-conscious'.<sup>208</sup> The South Australian Housing Trust Board and staff operated from Paringa Building in Hindley Street, Adelaide, for most its first 20 years (1937–58), and bought the building in 1946.

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<sup>204</sup> S Marsden, *Business, charity and sentiment*, pp. 115–116.

<sup>205</sup> Griffin & McCaskill, p. 28.

<sup>206</sup> Noted in DT Brash, *American investment in Australian industry*, 1966, p. 45.

<sup>207</sup> (Both quotations) D Jaensch, 'The Playford era', in D Jaensch, ed, *The Flinders history of South Australia: political history*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1986, p 266.

<sup>208</sup> S Marsden, 'Alexander Ramsay', in J Ritchie, gen ed, *ADB 16*, MUP, Carlton, 2002, p. 53.



'Although the Playford Liberal Country Party administration... expressed a strong laissez faire policy to industry, growth and land, the key instrument of its success rests in the social democratic ...policies and projects of the South Australian Housing Trust under [Alex] Ramsay'. The South Australian Housing Trust facilitated the establishment and expansion of industry by providing affordable worker housing but it was also permitted to experiment with housing types, density, community services and infrastructure. The first of these were all designed in the period 1946–1969, providing a significant legacy of estates, reserves, suburb layouts and dwellings designed by 'the group of innovative planners and architects under the vision of Ramsay that distinguished South Australia as having the highest level of public housing ownership in Australia'.<sup>209</sup> Ramsay was General Manager from 1949-78.

Playford was also skilled in citing South Australia's disadvantages relative to the larger states to get national resources redistributed under the federal system. 'Playford's determination for industrial development was most evident in his relations with the Commonwealth Government' as he presented sound cases for 'more than a fair deal for his state', backed by bargaining and public threats. Playford's political astuteness extended to establishing good relations with Labor prime ministers, recognising their similar willingness to use government resources for nation-building.

He also drew on Commonwealth policies to further development, for example by maintaining price controls.<sup>210</sup> 'He believes price control was vital during this time [of industrial peace in South Australia].' Industrial unrest could be averted by giving workers a reasonable living with such 'fundamentals' as affordable homes and family goods such as children's clothing.<sup>211</sup> The Commonwealth handed over control of prices in 1948 and South Australia maintained petrol rationing until 1950, price controls on clothing until 1952 and building controls until 1953. The South Australian Housing Trust administered rent control of private commercial and residential premises until 1962.<sup>212</sup>

Playford prolonged his tenure as Liberal-Country League premier by maintaining an electoral bias towards rural (LCL) voters (dubbed the 'Playmander'). From 1936 only one third of House of Assembly seats were allocated to metropolitan Adelaide, even though by 1954 it contained nearly two thirds of the state's population. Playford's own urbanising policies meant that demographic changes eroded this electoral bias and eventually brought the ALP to government when it won Barossa and Glenelg in the election of 1965. Postwar suburbs in those electorates thus have political as well as social and economic heritage significance.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> DS Jones, 'Designed landscapes of South Australia', Report to AHC, University of Adelaide 1997, p. 35 (both quotations).

<sup>210</sup> Jaensch, 'The Playford era', p 267.

<sup>211</sup> Nicholas, p 106 (including quotation).

<sup>212</sup> *South Australian Year Book 1966*, pp. 544–5.

<sup>213</sup> J Stock, 'The "Playmander" revisited: the significance of cross-voting in estimating the two-party vote in South Australia, 1943–1953', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 26, 2, 1991, pp. 331–3. Stock concludes that had a fair electoral system been in operation (doubling city seats) the ALP would have won office in 1944 and 1953 (p. 340). See also Jaensch, pp. 258–9.

## *Administering South Australians*

### **Managing migrants**

New migrants were housed at camps ('holding centres' or hostels) many of them hastily converted internment or army camps that were meant to provide temporary shelter until the migrants found jobs and homes. Their sheer numbers meant that there were long delays and frustrations mounted, especially at Bonegilla (Victoria), the largest camp and where many of the new arrivals were sent first before moving to the other states. In July 1952, 2,000 Italians rioted in protest over the conditions at Bonegilla and the lack of work.<sup>214</sup> Most centres in South Australia were also converted military barracks but they initially included a woolshed at Rosewater, the wartime Air Force base at Mallala, converted to house 400 people, and a hostel at Gawler.<sup>215</sup>

Around 400 British migrants moved from Rosewater and Finsbury hostels into 'Nissen Hut flats' at Gepps Cross hostel in 1951 (the South Australian Housing Trust took over administration in 1953). The hostel provided 'standard British migrant accommodation, the first of its kind in South Australia'. This comprised 'Cream painted furnished flats ... for families of 3, 4, 5 and more people. Floors are covered with linoleum and bed mats, while the comfortable beds have sheets, pillowcases and 4 blankets for cold weather'.<sup>216</sup> By the late 1950s, Commonwealth Hostels Ltd operated more than 30 hostels in Australia.<sup>217</sup>

Little remains of these migrant camps but it is important to record them. *Truth's* customary hyperbole scarcely exaggerated when it reported in 1954, 'Migrants up in arms over slum conditions in hostel camps', with hundreds 'living in unbelievably cramped slum-like emergency housing settlements'. Many claimed they were misled by promises of decent housing, having lived up to three years in these huts. *Truth* found 'incredibly cramped quarters assigned to large families in dusty, drab collections of tin buildings'. The settlements reminded migrants 'uncomfortably of Nazi concentration camps - with high barbed wire fences at the perimeters, lines of huts sited with military precision, and a general atmosphere of regimentation'. Finsbury (Commonwealth Hostels) was 'one of the most primitive camps in the state...', with communal eating and washing huts and families 'crowded into cramped huts built on desolate dirt'. Families were allocated three rooms in half a Nissen hut or four smaller rooms in a barracks, while they awaited South Australian Housing Trust or private homes.

*Truth* quoted (anonymously) an interview with Anthonius Dam, a Dutch factory hand who had sold his business to come to Australia, arriving without money. 'They promised us good jobs, good wages and good houses. The wages and jobs are quite all right, but the good houses! Does Mr Menzies live in a place like this?' He'd been promised a South Australian Housing Trust house but was 'fobbed off with excuses every time he approached the trust.' 'I don't have enough money left from my wages after paying the rent to get enough money to get my own block, and with four children I can't get anywhere else to live.' *Truth's* photograph of a Nissen

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<sup>214</sup> G Cresciani, *The Italians in Australia*, CUP, Cambridge, 2003, pp. 128-9.

<sup>215</sup> *The Advertiser*, 6 July 1951 (re woolshed); Heritage Investigations, 'Heritage Survey of the Lower North', 1982, DC Mallala, Item ID sheet no 22, Airforce base site.

<sup>216</sup> *The Advertiser*, 6 July 1951

<sup>217</sup> K Walsh, *The changing face of Australia*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2001, p. 164.

hut at Finsbury was probably the one occupied by the Dam family as the caption describes half of the hut being occupied by a family of 6, for which nearly £12 rent was paid.<sup>218</sup>

Other migrants were directly recruited to the new settlements of Whyalla and Elizabeth. Both the Commonwealth and BHP advertised overseas for fitters, turners and machinists to work in Whyalla. The influx of new workers exacerbated the housing shortage – despite construction by BHP and South Australian Housing Trust – and many lived in tents and sheds until they built or rented new homes.

Good Neighbour Councils and Australian Citizenship Conventions were established by the Chifley Government in 1949 in direct response to the government's own immigration program. 'Our aim is to Australianise all our migrants ... in as short a time as possible ... only the local Australian people ... can bring about the ultimate assimilation of any group of migrants in their midst.' These organisations emphasised assimilation to the prevailing British-Australian culture but also addressed the changes that were making society more culturally and ethnically mixed, and helped to redefine the meaning of Australian identity.<sup>219</sup>

### Providing services

By the early 1950's the first of the post-war babies were ready to enter the schools and were joined by children of many nationalities whose parents had come from Europe ... Australian parents began to hear strange foreign names tripping easily from the tongues of their offspring as they became acquainted with the newcomers. The staff, already harassed by large classes, struggled to find time to teach basic English to children who came to school with barely a word of the language ... Mrs. Lorna Harvey ...[who] arrived in 1956 to begin her eighteen years of teaching at the school ... discovered that she had been given a class of seventy Grade 3 boys ... As the children poured into the school the wooden 'pre-fabs' began to be lined up in neat ranks...<sup>220</sup>

Traditionally, government health, welfare and cultural services were highly centralised. In Adelaide, the major institutions were located cheek by jowl along North Terrace, and were upgraded and expanded, usually at the expense of public space (Royal Adelaide Hospital extensions encroached on the Botanic Gardens). However, suburban and regional growth brought the first substantial construction of major public institutions outside the city centre and planning for others (such as a second university).

The Playford Government was notorious for its parsimony in non-economic areas like education, welfare and culture but a massive building program provided essential, if unappealing, accommodation for schoolchildren, patients and even book borrowers. The 1950 annual report of the Architect-in-Chief's Department was typical. It described Adelaide Boys High School as being ready for occupation by February 1951; planning Brighton High School; constructing seven school and police

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<sup>218</sup> *Adelaide Truth*, 20 March 1954, p 5. Cutting held by Maria Dam, kept by her father, Anthonius, the Dutch migrant who lived with his family in one-half of one Nissen hut, and is quoted anonymously in this article. Perhaps the report did the trick because the Dam family were allocated a SAHT house at Northfield by Christmas of the same year.

<sup>219</sup> G Tavan, 'Good neighbours': community organisations, migrant assimilation and Australian society and culture, 1950–1961', J Murphy & J Smart, eds, *The forgotten fifties: aspects of Australian society and culture in the 1950s* (*Australian Historical Studies*, no 109, Oct 1997), pp. 77, 78 (quotation by Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell), 89.

<sup>220</sup> *East Adelaide School history: 1952–1966*, South Australian Education Dept., 1999, [www.eas.sa.edu.au/history/1952.html](http://www.eas.sa.edu.au/history/1952.html)

residences; and starting on new nurses' homes at the Royal Adelaide Hospital and Parkside Mental Hospital. The Minister also reported that plans were completed 'for the construction of a maternity section at Woodville to function as a complete hospital until the full scheme of erecting a public hospital to serve the western districts of Adelaide can be put in hand'.<sup>221</sup>

This was the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (1954), the state's second large and first decentralised government hospital. It was followed by Lyell McEwen Hospital at Elizabeth Vale in 1959. Substantial extensions were also made to the Royal Adelaide Hospital. Community hospitals were a new response to growing demand after the war and the state government contributed 2:1 for money raised by voluntary effort and local government. Burnside War Memorial Hospital (1949) was the first, followed by Glenelg District Community Hospital and Ashford Community Hospital (both 1950).<sup>222</sup> Blackwood and District Community Hospital was opened in 1954.

Playford's commitment to making Elizabeth a success overcame his reluctance to spend money on such luxuries as books and in 1957 he opened the Elizabeth Library (now Elizabeth South Branch Library) and joined it as Member No 1A. This was the state's first regional public library and it was financed by Salisbury District Council and subsidised by the government.<sup>223</sup> The parent State Library was also financed by the government through a direct grant to the Libraries Board, and between 1940–60 this increased from £24,000 to £426,200. This increase was greater than that of the next 20 years, and the difference is even larger taking inflation into account.<sup>224</sup>

Schools were the frontline of social change and the sheer pressure of numbers meant also that they required huge public expenditure. Between 1947–58 the numbers of South Australian school children rose by 110% compared to 35% in Britain. Adelaide High School is entered on the SHR and an indicative place on the RNE. Much more typical of this era are schools such as South Road Primary School at St Marys, opened in 1952. In Marion Council, a major arena of postwar suburban development, the numbers of school-age children increased by 551% in 1947–54. Their nearest state secondary school was at Brighton (opened in 1952: it is registered as a Local Heritage Place).

Marion High School, the district's first secondary school, opened in 1955 on a former vineyard and almond orchard. The remaining trees were harvested to raise money for better facilities, as the school opened with insufficient furniture, unfinished toilets, unpaved grounds, and had no permanent building until 1958. Altogether, 10 primary schools and six high schools and technical high schools were built in Marion within 20 years where none had existed before but, even so, classes of 50 students and temporary classrooms were common.<sup>225</sup>

In keeping with the government's utilitarianism, there was a strong emphasis on technical education. 'I stayed at the Technical School ... I was part of a school that was a factory, pumping forth each year, from the swollen Commercial class, the girls

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<sup>221</sup> SAPP No. 29 *Annual Report of the Public Works Dept.* 30 June 1950 Architect-in Chief's Dept, p13, p 4

<sup>222</sup> ILD Forbes, 'Hospitals', in W Prest, K Round & C Fort, eds, *The Wakefield companion to South Australian history*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide 2001, p. 268.

<sup>223</sup> M Galbreath & G Pearson, *Elizabeth the garden city*, Investigator Press South Australia, 1982, p. 55.

<sup>224</sup> A Brissenden, 'Culture and the state: the case of South Australia', *Australian Cultural History*, ANU, Canberra, 1982, p. 43.

<sup>225</sup> RJR Donley, *Marion: a suburban city 1945–2000*, Peacock Publications, Adelaide 2001, pp 121–26.

of fifteen who would go to work and typists and clerks.<sup>226</sup> By the early 1960s separate boys' and girls' technical high schools were built in many working-class suburbs, including at Port Adelaide, Angle Park, Elizabeth, Mitchell Park, Vermont, and an Automotive Trades School in Adelaide.<sup>227</sup>

The social origins of students at University of Adelaide began to diversify after World War II. The campus was a microcosm of social and physical changes in the surrounding community. Two sets of students were unique in the University's history: returned servicemen (collectively supported by the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme) and Asian students, who arrived under the Colombo Plan. Australia took part in this network of donor countries and developing East and Southeast Asian countries from the first five-year scheme in 1951.<sup>228</sup>

The University also broke with the past in its new buildings, which were unabashedly modernist and functionalist. They included the Observatory, the Union Hall and the Napier Building, the first high-rise on the campus, designed by the Melbourne firm of Bates, Smart and McCutcheon in 1959. 'Its crisp rectilinear lines were the height of contemporary design, but form an unsatisfactory element in the North Terrace streetscape.'<sup>229</sup>

### ***Developing democracy***

#### **Reforming local government**

Local government was weak in relation to state and local government. There was little change in this relationship but postwar growth placed exceptional pressure on councils and heightened popular interest in changing them through new progress associations and at elections. Marion Council was typical. Elections were rare and few positions contested until the Marion Progress Association was formed in 1953 to represent new settlers. It proposed changing the rating system to rates on unimproved land values, thus taxing rural landowners rather than suburban householders. The Association won key positions at the election and gained ratepayer support for the rating change (in the process accelerating suburbanisation).<sup>230</sup>

#### **Struggling for the Aboriginal cause**

Dr Charles Duguid and his wife Phyllis were renowned crusaders for Aboriginal people throughout Australia and Aboriginal visitors were a constant presence at their home (33 Dequetteville Terrace, Kent Town). Duguid was president of the Aborigines Protection League in the 1930s and persuaded his Presbyterian Church to establish Ernabella Mission in 1937 as a buffer between the Pitjantjatjara people of northern South Australia and the cruelties of advancing 'civilisation'. He was also a member of the South Australian Aborigines Protection Board but led a public protest in 1947 and then resigned when the Board agreed to allow a rocket range (Woomera) though the Central Aborigines Reserve.

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<sup>226</sup> Hanrahan, *Scent of eucalyptus*, p. 179 (Thebarton Technical High School in the 1950s).

<sup>227</sup> Listed in internet search on South Australian Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works (NLA).

<sup>228</sup> *Australia's Prime Ministers-timeline*, National Archives of Australia, Canberra 2002, [primeministers.naa.gov.au/timeline.asp?action=show&viewAll=true](http://primeministers.naa.gov.au/timeline.asp?action=show&viewAll=true)

<sup>229</sup> M Queale & N Di Lernia, *Adelaide's architecture and art: a walking guide*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1996, p. 54.

<sup>230</sup> Donley, pp. 82–3.

As president of the Aborigines Advancement League, Duguid 'encouraged the Aboriginal people to state their own case in public', and in 1953 booked Adelaide Town Hall for a public meeting. It was probably the first time that Aborigines were to address a town hall audience and there was great media interest and the hall was packed. Highlights of the meeting were the speeches by George Rankine of Adelaide, 'one of the older leaders of his people', Peter Tilmouth (Alice Springs), Mona Paull (Quorn), and Ivy Mitchell and Jeff Barnes (Adelaide). One of the young women said that Royal Adelaide Hospital's matron would not accept Aboriginal girls for nurse training; as a result, this discrimination was ended. But Duguid was well aware that such changes were not tokens of a 'new deal' for Aboriginal people.<sup>231</sup>

Further hint of change in mainstream attitudes was suggested by *Adelaide Truth* in 1954. 'Whisper from Parliament House is that Cabinet's proposal to settle ex-servicemen on best portions of Yalata Aborigine Mission, Eyre Peninsula, has been dropped. Apparently Premier Playford realised that if proposal had been carried through – virtually wiping out the Mission – the ensuing uproar would be heard all over Commonwealth'.<sup>232</sup> The most important event of the period was in 1958 when a predominantly Aboriginal group formed the Federal Council for Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders at a conference held in Adelaide.

### Working for women's rights

Attitudes towards women in paid work were modified when they took over men's roles during the war on farms, in factories and as volunteers but the gains were only temporary and women were expected to retreat to domesticity when peace came. The National Council of Women (NCW) represented 23 women's organisations and was very active as gains were eroded. The South Australian Joint Committee for Equal Pay lobbied government and employers but the task was too difficult for the small group and the role was taken up in 1962 by the Equal Pay Council. South Australia took part in the first arbitration case through the NCW. The Commonwealth Arbitration Court determined wage levels and in 1950 established the first basic female wage at 75% of the male minimum for the same work. Women's organisations celebrated in 1958 when a woman became a primary school headmistress – but she did not get equal pay.<sup>233</sup>

Historic gains were made in getting women into parliament – but only after an intense campaign, especially by the League of Women Voters of South Australia.<sup>234</sup> South Australia was the first place in the world to grant women the right to stand for parliament but none succeeded until 1959, long after Edith Cowan was elected to Western Australia's parliament (in 1921). Women were elected to local government in South Australia from the 1920s but Esther Lipman (later Lady Jacobs) was the first to serve on the Adelaide City Council, in 1956. Later she was acting Lord Mayor. South Australia's first female MP was elected to the Commonwealth Parliament in 1955. Mrs

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<sup>231</sup> (Both paragraphs) C Duguid, *Doctor goes walkabout*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1972, Foreword (by M Oliphant), pp. 150–52, 175–7, and passim; *Who's who in Australia 1968*.

<sup>232</sup> *Adelaide Truth*, 20 March 1954.

<sup>233</sup> Jones, pp. 370–71; 'Chronology of landmark events for women in Australia 1883–1992', *Newsletter of the HSSA*, Jan. 2003. See also, Commonwealth of Australia, *Equal Pay*, Melbourne, 1968; M Nugent, *Women's employment and professionalism in Australia, histories, themes and places*, Report to AHC, 2002, p. 41; BJ Pitt, *Greater than their knowing*, pp. 109, 111.

<sup>234</sup> See E Martin & N Bates, 'The South Australian League of Women Voters and the post-war women's movement', *Journal of the HSSA* no 24, 1996, pp. 5–6 and passim.

Nancy Butterfield, a daughter of the Holden family, was president of the LCL Adelaide Women's Branch. She stood unsuccessfully for the federal seat of Adelaide in 1954 and when the incumbent died in 1955, was appointed to the Senate (at her suggestion to Playford) and successfully stood for election in the same year.<sup>235</sup>

Women's acceptance as endorsed candidates in winnable state seats was crucial to their election to the South Australian parliament. By 1959 a total of 26 female candidates had contested elections, half of them since 1946. The main parties came to support women who abandoned independent attempts and joined the majority of contenders. The election was significant because of the number of endorsed female candidates and a last-minute court case removed doubts about women's eligibility to stand for the Legislative Council.<sup>236</sup>

Mrs Jessie Cooper stood for Central No. 2 electorate and was elected to the Legislative Council. Mrs Joyce Steele stood for Burnside and was elected to the House of Assembly. Both were LCL members. Margaret Scott and Doreen Pattison stood for the ALP in the same election as well as three other women; none were successful. Cooper had been secretary of the largest private girls' school in NSW. She entered South Australian politics at branch level and became president of the Liberal Women's Educational Association. In 1952, she was defeated in the preselection poll but won in 1959. She later played a role in the equal pay debate of the 1960s. Steele was a former ABC announcer and worker for disabled children. Her election made headlines and caused rejoicing in women's organisations. She became Government Whip in the 1960s and was later Minister of Education, and Minister for Social Welfare and Aboriginal Affairs.<sup>237</sup>

### ***Defence in a Cold War***

South Australia was the state by far the most affected by postwar developments in weapons research and testing. Nuclear weapons development started in 1942 when the USA established the Manhattan Project to build an atomic bomb, conducting its first test in 1945 in New Mexico. The British Government assisted in the Project but the US terminated cooperation at the end of World War II, and in 1947, Britain decided build its own weapons.<sup>238</sup> The use of Australian sites for testing reflects the poor postwar relationship between Britain and the USA and 'the isolationism and suspicion in foreign relations which characterised the ... cold war. The ready agreement of the Australian government to the use of Australia for these tests characterises Australia's relations with Britain in the period'.<sup>239</sup> Not all Australians supported this policy and there were atomic weapons protests in Adelaide in 1950 and 1957.

Open-air atomic test sites were developed by the British at three places in Australia: at Western Australia's Monte Bello Islands and in outback South Australia at Emu Field and Maralinga. The first test was held on 3 October 1952 at Monte Bello and the last test there was in 1956. Emu Field near Coober Pedy was used for two of the 12 major tests, in October 1953. The village was abandoned in favour of Maralinga but the

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<sup>235</sup> J Donovan, 'Dame Nancy Butterfield', in *Playford's South Australia*, p. 64; Jones, p. 232.

<sup>236</sup> Jones, pp. 326, 347, 355.

<sup>237</sup> Jones, pp. 327, 348.

<sup>238</sup> *Nuclear weapons testing countries*, Greenpeace, 1996, [archive.greenpeace.org/comms/nukes/ctbt/read8.html](http://archive.greenpeace.org/comms/nukes/ctbt/read8.html).

<sup>239</sup> Emu Field Village Site and Range, RNE entry, AHC, [www.ahc.gov.au/cgi-bin/register/site.pl?017638](http://www.ahc.gov.au/cgi-bin/register/site.pl?017638)

footings remain as well as an airstrip, plinths, camera tower sites, mounds and firing pads marking the sites of the major 'totem' explosions and the minor 'kitten' trials.

The Australian and UK governments agreed to establish a testing ground at Maralinga in 1955 and atomic weapons were tested there until 1963. Maralinga was an Aboriginal name chosen by the British because it meant 'field of thunder'. A village was constructed in 1956 (see Special-purpose towns). Four atomic bombs were exploded in 'Operation Buffalo', the first on 27 September 1956, and the series was followed a year later by three tests in 'Operation Antler'. The last in this series was 26.6 kt, the largest explosion at Maralinga.<sup>240</sup>

The *Advertiser* published Commonwealth government reports on British and Canadian cooperation in the Maralinga tests and possible closer ties between the UK and the USA in rocket research at Woomera. These announcements 'were designed to showcase the importance of international cooperation to Australia and to generate public confidence and an atmosphere of trust'.<sup>241</sup> In 1956 the public was also advised that an Atomic Weapons Tests Safety Committee was formed. The committee represented the government's realisation of the test hazards but it then suppressed public knowledge of CSIRO research confirming the widespread effects of radioactive fallout. CSIRO scientist Hedley Marston, who secretly set up monitoring stations at Urrbrae and Roseworthy, detected fallout at least three times in Adelaide during the late 1950s.<sup>242</sup> British and Australian personnel at Maralinga and Aboriginal families near the test sites suffered long-term damage to their health.

After completing tests in South Australia, Britain moved testing to the Pacific islands, as had the French and the Americans, before resuming cooperation in underground testing in the US. The USA Government was keen to gain a long-term, secure supply of weapons fuel and Playford promoted South Australia's uranium on visits there in 1951 and 1953. The Radium Hill Project was established as a branch of the Mines Department in 1953.<sup>243</sup> (*See also* Mining.)

The British Government was also determined upon long range (rocket) weapons research. The Long Range Weapons Organisation headquarters were at the Commonwealth's Department of Munitions in Melbourne. The Long Range Weapons Establishment (later, WRE) was set up in 1947 at Salisbury. This was a research and development base for the Chief Scientific Officer and his team (initially all British) and soon became the largest research complex in the southern hemisphere. They used the airbase at Mallala and the rocket range established at Woomera. Len Beadell

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<sup>240</sup> The contaminated site was roughly cleaned up by the British in the 1960s and more comprehensively by the Commonwealth in the 1990s; in 1995 compensation was finally paid by the British to the Tjarutja people cleared from the site and harmed by radioactivity.

<sup>241</sup> Cross, pp. 30–1.

<sup>242</sup> CSIRO's Division of Biochemistry and General Nutrition, of which Hedley Marston was head, was engaged by the British to test sheep and cattle thyroids for radioactive iodine after the Monte Bello and Maralinga tests in 1956. Marston showed that radioactive fallout had resulted and wrote a paper for a scientific journal. The government's Safety Committee refused to admit to any problems, and tried to prevent publication. Marston's paper finally appeared in the *Australian Journal of Biological Sciences* in August 1958. The only newspaper to report on it was *Stock and Land*, a national farmers' paper. In spite of the publication of Marston's article, further testing took place at Maralinga in the early 1960s. Tests conducted by federal agencies between 1957 and 1978 confirmed the presence of the radioactive isotope strontium-90 in the bones of thousands of dead South Australians as well as sheep bones, flour, milk and rainwater. Cross, p. 156; *Advertiser* 6 May 2003.

<sup>243</sup> B O'Neil, in *Playford's South Australia*, pp. 162–3.



surveyed the Woomera Rocket Range and his mile markings have been recently restored.<sup>244</sup>

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## The social and cultural life of South Australians

All was as it should be (the collector shreds his tickets at the door, the lovers cuddle in the balcony, the mothers eat their dandies in the lounge, the gangs wait with their spit-bombs in the front – the manager waits for pursuit with his torch). As velvet, then silk, then gauze rippled apart, and we stood in homage to the queen and the horse ... And there is Tarzan ... and Our Gang and the MGM lion and Tom and Jerry.<sup>245</sup>

### *Having fun*

Barbara Hanrahan recalls in this description many of the elements of postwar entertainment: cinemas with their American cartoons, Australian lollies, mothers, lovers, teenage gangs, the young Queen. Teenagers were beginning to be considered a distinct category by the 1950s but 'they were equally regarded as dependent beings, in need of constant adult supervision and a cautious monitoring', especially in fun places like dance halls and darkened cinemas. Adult alarm mounted with the first blasts of rock 'n roll in Australian cinemas in the mid-1950s.<sup>246</sup>

Thousands of children and teenagers spent Saturday afternoons at 'the pictures', those elaborate interwar cinemas with plush foyers and hard seats. Woomera's social life centred on the cinema. 'It was not unusual to go two or three times a week. The dances were also held there and I still have a record of the "Rocket Range Rythm". Films were also shown down at the Red Shield Hut.'<sup>247</sup> The architectural firm of Milne, Dawkins and Boehm was involved with Hoyt's Ozone Theatre chain and when Russell Ellis became a partner he worked on designing and enlarging eight theatres in the boom period of the 1950s and 1960s. 'The cinema at Glenelg in 1959 ... had a curved sweeping staircase ... and a similarly sinuous balcony from the heyday of Hollywood'.<sup>248</sup>

This was radio's golden era as it was the only electronic source of news and entertainment in people's homes. Commercial stations and the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) aired music, serials, news and sport and the ABC also operated orchestras and choral groups.<sup>249</sup> Hollywood entered the home when regular television transmission began in Sydney and Melbourne in 1956 but there was no TV in South Australia until 1959.

As in the past, people made their own fun, especially in new places with few amenities. At Kangaroo Island's soldier settlement camp the Rec. Hut was too small

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<sup>244</sup> *The Courier*, People in Profile, George (Dostal Wood) following in famous footsteps, June 2003

<sup>245</sup> Hanrahan, *The scent of eucalyptus*, p 175.

<sup>246</sup> R Evans, '...To try to ruin': Rock'nRoll, youth culture and law 'n' order in Brisbane, 1956–1957', Murphy & Smart, p. 109.

<sup>247</sup> Fay Bryant, 'Memories of Woomera' 36 (1954–60), *Woomera on the web*, MT Rigby, Oct 2003, [homepage.powerup.com.au/~woomera/memor36.htm](http://homepage.powerup.com.au/~woomera/memor36.htm)

<sup>248</sup> C Cheshire & DL Johnson, 'Russell Ellis: South Australian architect and master draughtsman', *Society of Architectural Historians Australia & New Zealand Journal*, Adelaide, May 1987, p. 50.

<sup>249</sup> S Marsden, Historical introduction, H Cross & M Chambers, *Sound recordings in the National Archives*, NAA, Canberra 2001, p. 16.

for the crowds of weekend dancers. They took over a store shed as the district hall until 1965, using it also for church services and the meetings of new organisations – the RSL, Agricultural Bureau, School Committee, church guilds and the Show Society. 'The administration provided the building and an opportunity – the people did the rest. They had a lot of fun and there was a great spirit of caring and sharing.'<sup>250</sup>

Judy Murdoch lived in Nuriootpa when the first Vintage Festival of 1949 was 'embraced with great enthusiasm by each of the Barossa communities'. Nuriootpa staged the main parade and the Vintage Ball. 'The floats were magic and very much about wine and wineries... small but lovely in their detail. The Yalumba one was my favourite: a huge wine cask made into a coach and drawn by horses. The town 'Queens' we all knew, and their lovely, elegant ball gowns ...this was, after all a time of beautiful evening wear.' The ball 'was bedlam, with marquees with bands playing different styles of music from oompa to jazz', with contemporary dance music played in the Town Hall. 'I was an onlooker at the ball in my first year of the Festival, but was allowed to attend the next year...my first evening dress...soft yellow voile, with a very full skirt, puffed sleeves and a little-girl frill round the wide neckline. Mum made it, as she did most of my clothes for most of my life at home.'

'The car, together with greater affluence and increased leisure time, permitted South Australians to participate in more leisure activities than had been the case in earlier generations.' One effect, however, was a reduction in football and cricket spectatorship. Motor sports were popular and a racing circuit was opened at Port Wakefield in 1953.<sup>251</sup> Families could also drive to the beach and the bush, which remained popular. Government funded 'National Pleasure Resorts' included facilities in the Flinders Ranges at Mambray Creek, Alligator Gorge and Wilpena Pound.<sup>252</sup> In Mitcham, the Brownhill Creek camping ground was developed in 1954, with amenity blocks built of freestone as part of a National Pleasure Resort of 120 acres.<sup>253</sup>

### ***Worshipping***

It is not an overstatement to say that a new housing area without a Church is an area wide open to the influence of Godless secularism with an inevitable upsurge of delinquency.<sup>254</sup>

The postwar years are portrayed in religious history as a time of confidence and expansion in Australia, when, after a long pause, Protestant church membership and Sunday school enrolments soared. American-style fund-raising techniques boosted church incomes and helped to finance buildings in the new suburbs. One of the most noteworthy – because of the fame of its rector, Howell Witt – was the Anglican Mission (1959) at Elizabeth (now a registered Local Heritage Place). Witt himself noted that the churches had spent £250,000 on buildings at Elizabeth but 'not one of them is worth a second glance'.<sup>255</sup> Churches were also active in the public sphere, pronouncing judgements on social policy and political movements and creating

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<sup>250</sup> Nunn, p. 47.

<sup>251</sup> P Donovan, 'Motor cars and freeways: measures of a South Australian love affair', O'Neil et al, p. 205 (including quotation).

<sup>252</sup> *National Pleasure Resorts Report*, 30 June 1950, SAPP No. 49.

<sup>253</sup> M Ragless, 'Mitcham district 1946–1959 chronology', Local History Collection, Mitcham Community Centre.

<sup>254</sup> Bishop's Home Mission Society, 1957, quoted in D Hilliard, 'Religion in Playford's South Australia', O'Neil et al, p. 264.

<sup>255</sup> Hilliard, 'Religion in Playford's South Australia', O'Neil et al, p. 259.

organisations such as the Marriage Guidance Council. (The South Australian council was formed in 1957.)<sup>256</sup>

Migrants added to active church membership and for the first time in South Australian history Roman Catholic numbers rose strongly in relation to Protestant numbers. Catholics grew from 12% of the population before World War II to 20% by 1966.<sup>257</sup> St Mark's Cathedral, rebuilt when the first Catholic church at Port Pirie was gutted by fire in 1946, opened in 1953 to serve the local Catholic (and Italian) community.<sup>258</sup> Migrant priests also founded new denominations in South Australia and initially held services in existing churches. Serbian Orthodox services from 1949–59 were held in Anglican churches in Halifax Street, Adelaide, and Mary Street, Hindmarsh. Another Anglican church was used by the Ukrainian Orthodox community in 1950 but they erected their own small church of Saint Michael at Thebarton in the same year.<sup>259</sup>

Despite this explosion in church numbers, Milo Dunphy deplored the 'catatonic' mindset that kept most church architecture 'mediaeval'.<sup>260</sup> Yet churches and religious associations offered special opportunities for new designs, and some began to appear in the 1950s. Michelmores, Roeger and Russell designed the Catholic Church of the Holy Name on Payneham Road, St Peters (1957). Large sun louvres endow the interior with religious ambience and it includes the only fresco in South Australia. The YMCA building in Flinders Street, Adelaide (1958) was 'unashamedly modern in design', with a stainless steel shopfront and blue-tiled façade.<sup>261</sup>

In keeping with the practices of the age, buildings were also removed from declining places to new locations: for example, the Catholic Church at the hamlet of Gordon near Quorn was dismantled, transported and rebuilt at Kimba (it has been recommended for the State Heritage Register).<sup>262</sup>

### ***Forming associations***

Few of the settlers who arrived in Loxton in the years 1948 through to 1955 knew each other. Men and women were quickly drawn together however through working together and helping each other out. Personal, family and community networks developed and most settlers believe these relationships were central to their survival in the pioneering years at Loxton. Many of these networks still exist today and are integral to the Loxton community.<sup>263</sup>

South Australians were vigorous organisation-builders. Most were family-centred or focused on other needs of developing areas or of groups such as ex-servicemen, youth or migrants. The Returned Sailors' Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia (RSSAILA), later the Returned Services League (RSL), was a powerful

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<sup>256</sup> D Hilliard, 'Church, family and sexuality in Australia in the 1950s', Murphy & Smart, pp. 135, 139.

<sup>257</sup> Hilliard, 'Religion in Playford's South Australia', O'Neil et al, p. 254.

<sup>258</sup> Lester Firth and Murton Pty Ltd, *Port Pirie Conservation Study*, Dept. of Urban & Regional Affairs, 1980, Item ID sheet no. 053, St Mark's Cathedral.

<sup>259</sup> G Kellis, 'The Orthodox Christian Church in South Australia', *Flinders journal of history and politics*, vol 10, 1984, pp. 56–7.

<sup>260</sup> M Dunphy, 'Aspects of church design', *Architecture in Australia*, vol 47, no 2, April 1958.

<sup>261</sup> Queale & Di Lernia, p. 134.

<sup>262</sup> Danvers Architects, *Heritage of the Eyre Peninsula*, DEP, Adelaide, 1987, pp. 71–72, 202.

<sup>263</sup> George, 'Parties in a street with no name. Loxton soldier settlers and the development of a new community'.

organisation, although, in the words of its own history, 'When the veterans of World War II came home, the League welcomed them with less than wholehearted enthusiasm. The men of World War I were firmly in control and their grip was not loosened until the late 1950s...'.<sup>264</sup>

The RSL secured employment preference and repatriation services for ex-servicemen and enjoyed a renewed physical presence in nearly every suburb and town, with clubrooms that were often the first modern buildings in old streetscapes, such at Morgan (1956, identified in the Morgan Heritage Study). Findon Clubrooms occupied a wartime Nissen hut with a rendered façade. (It is listed as a Local Heritage Place, and so is the 1953 RSL Hall at Norwood Oval).

Mothers and children were the main concern of women's organisations. Typical was the Women's Australian National Service establishment in 1947 of Wanslea Training School to teach young women to care for a family during a mother's illness.<sup>265</sup> Adelaide women were energetic volunteers in welfare organisations. 'The Good Neighbour Council was working with recently arrived migrants and getting them settled. Going down to Pennington, greeting them all, talking to them and finding out if they had other relatives. That was very interesting and I enjoyed doing that.'<sup>266</sup>

The insecurity in employment and the frequent changes in jobs, the apprehension of being in a new environment and the rarity of social functions due largely to the low numbers of women in the communities, pushed young men to controversial Greek social clubs ... The increase in the number of *kefenion* and gambling houses was epidemic ...<sup>267</sup>

The lives of many migrants were enhanced by Alfred and Helga Freund-Zinnbauer, themselves Austrian victims of Nazi persecution who migrated to Adelaide in 1940. Helga worked as a librarian but Alfred was interned, finally taking up his post in 1945 as Lutheran City Missioner in Adelaide. He offered practical and spiritual help regardless of creed or colour and the couple financed much of his work themselves. From 1948, as refugees and migrants began to arrive, Zinnbauer helped them find housing, goods, jobs and schools. In 1951 the couple established a hostel at College Park and lived there for 24 years, sheltering thousands of people. Zinnbauer urged migrants 'to learn English and become loyal Australians' but also encouraged them to form their own cultural organisations.<sup>268</sup>

Many immigrants formed enduring organisations, although some evolved from disputes. In 1955, divisions within Adelaide's Greek Orthodox church led to the establishment of a second church (St Nikolaos) and caused 'serious episodes ... in the Greek centres and clubs in Hindley Street'.<sup>269</sup> Sports clubs were popular. Adelaide Croatia Soccer Club (1952) played its first game against a Philips Factory team at Hendon and its home ground was in Adelaide's South Parklands. Branko Filipi was president from 1954 for a record 14 years. Charles Perkins, who became a prominent Aboriginal activist, joined the team in 1958 and later represented Australia. 'In his

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<sup>264</sup> *About the RSL*, Returned & Services League, nd, viewed Oct 2003, <[www.rsl.org.au/about/nationalid.html](http://www.rsl.org.au/about/nationalid.html)>.

<sup>265</sup> It operated at Kingswood until 1985 and in the 1990s became a child care centre operated by Anglican Community Services. M Ragless, 'Mitcham district 1946–1959 chronology', Local History Collection, Mitcham Community Centre.

<sup>266</sup> Ann Marsden, interviewed by S Marsden 27 January 1995 (Transcript, S Marsden collection).

<sup>267</sup> Tamis, p. 85.

<sup>268</sup> M Rilett, 'Alfred and Helga Josephine Freund-Zinnbauer', J Ritchie, gen ed, *ADB*, vol 16, MUP Carlton 2002, p. 610.

<sup>269</sup> Tamis, p. 93.

autobiography he reflected with fondness on his friendships with Adelaide Croats and other immigrants he met through the club. Soccer was a truly multicultural sport and Adelaide Croatia reflected this.<sup>270</sup>

Other organisations included the Latvian Scout Group (1948); Jandalins, a Latvian folk dancing group (1949); Hungarian Folk Dance Group (1952); and the Polish Women's Association (1954). Some migrants chose not to form associations, for example, the Dutch, whose numbers were limited, and who spoke fluent English and assimilated readily. Due to the postwar shortage of housing in Holland and the independence of Indonesia, their numbers in South Australia rose from 86 in 1947 to 12,539 by 1961.<sup>271</sup>

The unprecedented destructiveness of postwar development encouraged the formation of new conservation groups. The Royal Geographical Society of Australasia South Australian Branch (RGS) formed a Historical Division in 1947 (it lapsed in the 1960s) and asked the government to preserve Austral (Ayers) House. The South Australian Methodist Historical Society formed in 1950 and the Australian Railway Historical Society: South Australian Division formed in 1952.

In 1951 HA (Bill) Lindsay (founder of the Adelaide Bushwalkers Club in 1946) and Geoffrey Clarke, MP, established a National Trust for South Australia modelled on that in England. (The National Trust was initiated in Australia in NSW in 1945.) True to form, Playford was discouraging and although the conservationist JB Cleland persuaded him to set up an alternative State Trust, the Bill lapsed. Major-General GW Symes (RGS President) and other 'establishment' figures helped revive the movement and a voluntary National Trust of South Australia was established by Act of Parliament in 1955. The Trust had a broad brief for built and natural heritage; Roachdale Reserve and Watiparinga Reserve were the first properties donated (1957). The Trust also encouraged new country branches. Renmark (1956) was the first and it opened the first National Trust museum in 1959. The Trust preserved buildings by acquisition and only later (in 1961) campaigned to save other heritage places.<sup>272</sup>

There was no government protection of historical buildings but some *de facto* preservation was provided by purchase, with voluntary trusts formed to care for them: Henley and Grange Council bought the Grange, home of the explorer Charles Sturt in 1956.<sup>273</sup> Monuments were erected to founding heroes such as Matthew Flinders (District Council of Elliston), and to regional workers – and their equipment, such as the monument/grader placed near the Eyre Highway. Most popular were memorials to district pioneers, including at Hahndorf, Mitcham and Tumby Bay (a Pioneer Memorial Clock).

### ***Remembering the fallen***

War memorials were fewer than after World War I and many were additions to the earlier monuments. In keeping with this pragmatic age, memorials frequently served

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<sup>270</sup> *Club history*, Adelaide Croatia Soccer Club, n.d., [www.croatiasa.com/soccerclub/club.htm](http://www.croatiasa.com/soccerclub/club.htm)

<sup>271</sup> By 1991 they had fallen again to 9,862. Flinders Ranges Research, *Dutch settlers in South Australia*, 2003, [www.southaustralianhistory.com.au/dutch.htm](http://www.southaustralianhistory.com.au/dutch.htm)

<sup>272</sup> K Round, 'The formation of the National Trust of South Australia', *Journal of the HSSA* no 22, 1994, pp. 5–31; S. Marsden, *History of the National Trust in Australia: significant dates & publications*, Australian Council of National Trusts, Canberra, 2001; M. Ragless, 'Mitcham district 1946–1959 chronology'.

<sup>273</sup> B Samuels, 'The historical context for built heritage conservation in South Australia' in *Heritage South Australia Newsletter*, no. 23, July 2003.

practical purposes as new community hospitals, halls and entrance gates. Blackwood Memorial Hall (1956) was typical. A War Memorial Hospital and Roll of Honour was erected at Kensington Road, Toorak Gardens in 1956. In 1958 the National Council of Women purchased a house at 95 South Terrace, Adelaide as headquarters, dedicated as a war memorial project for servicewomen. At Port Pirie, Memorial Gates were built during a period of economic prosperity in 1959 to commemorate those who had fought in World War II. They have been assessed as an outstanding example of post-war modernist design in rural South Australia and are on the State Heritage Register.<sup>274</sup>

### *Enjoying public spectacles*

The royal visit was a great spectacle. Queen Elizabeth II was crowned in 1953 and was the first reigning monarch to visit Australia. 'Royal Visits to Adelaide have traditionally been major events attracting huge crowds and much fanfare and preparation by the City Council, perhaps none more so than the visit of the newly-crowned Queen Elizabeth II in March 1954, which brought the City to a complete standstill.'<sup>275</sup> The Queen Mother also drew adoring crowds when she visited. When she opened the Queen Elizabeth Hospital on 5 March 1956, a gold salver inscribed with the modernist design of the new hospital was presented to her.<sup>276</sup>

### *Creating*

There was a wide community of singers across the state, and my parents were an integral part of it.

Judy Murdoch's parents sang in the Pirie Street Methodist Church choir and her mother took lessons from Madame Delmar Hall, 'the doyen of Adelaide singing teachers,' and sang recitals for the ABC, broadcast live from its Hindmarsh Square studio. Their social life was tied to music, including the Leidertafel and the Barossa Choralists, arranged by her father. 'Nuri was a musical place. The Head of the High School was Sid Tregenza ... We sang regularly in school assemblies, had an active school choir and he was a part... of a wide musical group who met and sang, just for fun.' A singing tradition was fostered amongst teachers while at Teachers College where Alva Penrose was an expert conductor for young people.<sup>277</sup>

There was little direct state support for cultural activities. The role of voluntary groups, such as the Country Women's Association (founded in South Australia in 1929), was crucial. The CWA 'kept craft skills alive, promoting and disseminating them throughout the urban and rural areas of the state'. By the 1950s there were approximately 12,000 members who enjoyed making pottery, embroideries and twine seating for pleasure, therapy and as fund-raisers.<sup>278</sup> The Arts Council of South Australia, a division of the Australian Council for the Arts, which administered federal grants through the state government, was discontinued in 1952 because of the lack of government support, and voluntary theatre groups 'battled on alone, with varying

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<sup>274</sup> Austral Archaeology Pty Ltd, *Upper North Heritage Survey*, pp. 47–48. See also SHR.

<sup>275</sup> *Royal visits to Adelaide*, Adelaide City Archives, viewed Nov 2003, [www.adelaidecitycouncil.com/archives/pdf/Royal%20Visit.pdf](http://www.adelaidecitycouncil.com/archives/pdf/Royal%20Visit.pdf) See also P Pike, *The Royal Presence in Australia 1867–1986*, Royalty Publishing, Adelaide, 1986.

<sup>276</sup> *Sunday Mail*, March 1956 (includes a photograph of the salver) [Newscuttings book, S Marsden collection].

<sup>277</sup> Murdoch, *Recollections*.

<sup>278</sup> N Ioannou, 'Decline to revival: decorative and applied arts, in O'Neil et al, pp. 236–37 (quotation).

results'. Professional and commercial theatre flourished. It was mainly imported but Ray Lawler's *Summer of the seventeenth doll* was staged in Adelaide in August 1956 with great success. South Australia also provided the locations for some new Australian film-making and the world premiere of *Robbery under arms* was held at Port Augusta in 1957.<sup>279</sup>

In 1958–59 Sir Lloyd Dumas and John Bishop arranged meetings to set up an Adelaide Festival of Arts based on the successful Edinburgh Festival. Bishop was Professor of Music at the University of Adelaide and Dumas, Managing Director and Chairman of Directors of the daily newspaper, *The Advertiser*. He also helped start Carols by Candlelight at Christmas and the South Australian National Theatre Movement. Dumas and the other South Australian businessmen who gave financial support were also keen to increase tourism, and the state government contributed towards the cost of publicity. The first Adelaide Festival was held in 1960 and soon became Australia's largest and most successful arts event.

### *Making homes*

The house was a basic South Australian Housing Trust house with three bedrooms, built by Housing Trust contractors for the War Service scheme. There was a living room with a tiny porch at the front, a kitchen with dinette, a small bathroom, and a laundry, lavatory and porch on the back. In 1950 it was an asbestolite box, uncomfortably intrusive in the stringy bark and wattle scrub. For the family of four... it was an exciting new home of their own.<sup>280</sup>

Australians have one of the highest rates of home ownership in the world, an achievement confirmed during the early postwar years. In 1947–54, even with building restrictions, South Australia was the state with the second highest proportional increase in occupied dwellings (28%) after Western Australia (31%).<sup>281</sup> The significance of government-supplied housing should not obscure the even greater scale of private building. Many people literally built their own. Bill Ellenby (FW Berzin) founded the South Australian Home Builders' Club in 1945 and during its 20 year existence members completed around 400 metropolitan houses, most of them still standing. Approximately 40 have been surveyed in Mitcham district alone.<sup>282</sup> Members banked hours of 'credit' by working on others' homes, withdrawn when other members worked on theirs. At a time of restrictions and shortages, the club provided 'an economical option – often the only option – for families who qualified for neither public housing nor war service homes, and who could not afford to employ architects or builders'.<sup>283</sup>

Work did not cease once the walls were up. Home-making was women's main work, and it extended to the garden and farmyard. The suburban house-and-garden is an icon of the 1950s but it was an icon hard-won and painstakingly created by thousands of men, women and children. There was help with free plants for South Australian Housing Trust customers and published advice from the Trust's John Dwight

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<sup>279</sup> A Painter, 'Entertainment: the changing scene', O'Neil et al, pp. 299, 302, 303.

<sup>280</sup> J Marsden, 'Yallambee, a soldier settlement farmhouse, South East of South Australia', in S Marsden, ed, *Our house: histories of Australian homes*, AHC, Canberra 2001, [www.heritage.gov.au/ourhouse/essay20.html](http://www.heritage.gov.au/ourhouse/essay20.html)

<sup>281</sup> ABS, *Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia 1954*, p. 643.

<sup>282</sup> C Garnaut, 'South Australian Home Builders' Club project', *Word of mouth*, Autumn 2003, p. 13.

<sup>283</sup> Hawke Centre, 'A home of one's own: house & owner 1945–1965', *Newsletter* Nov 2002, p. 1; D Langmead, 'Will the real Bill Ellenby please stand up', *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no 30, 2002, p. 68 (quotation).



but the first landscape design practice was not established in Adelaide until 1952 (by Robin Hill and Richard Massey).<sup>284</sup>

'Italian market-gardeners live in Grandfather Hanrahan's house – the sleepout is pulled down, cabbages grow instead of sunflowers.'<sup>285</sup> Migration, commerce, state policy and municipal progressivism transformed inner Adelaide as radically as suburbanisation effaced the rural margins. However, resident numbers changed little until the mid-1950s. There were even small increases with an influx of war workers, followed by migrants, mainly Greeks and Italians. Artist and novelist Barbara Hanrahan, who spent her childhood in Thebarton in the 1940s and 1950s, describes a well-established 'middle-end, lower-middle class place... a place of shop girls, clerks, factory workers and the genteel poor'.<sup>286</sup> In Rose Street, they included a Hungarian 'New Australian' boarder, an Italian family and an Italian corner shop owner.<sup>287</sup>

Chain migration brought many families to join relatives and former neighbours in South Australia and also influenced where they lived. 'Little Italy' was in Hindley Street. Migrants from Molfetta in Bari formed a 'prominent migration chain, with ... groupings in Gilles and Market Streets near the central city but also forming smaller concentrations in Maylands and Solomontown [Port Pirie]. Another major group chain was that linking ... Reggio di Calabria to clusters in Norwood, Fulham, Lockleys and Torrensville.' These areas became 'urban villages' as members kept the language and relationships of their towns in Italy and supported local Italian businesses. Strong Italian (and Greek) interest in home ownership reinforced these clustered settlement patterns.<sup>288</sup> Italians from all over Adelaide also enjoyed South Australia's first cappuccinos at Mario's Deli at Hectorville (the shop is listed as a Local Heritage Place).<sup>289</sup>

A Greek community, settled in the city's West End since the 1920s, helped postwar arrivals. Scarce housing 'saw two or three families sharing two-room cottages: they developed a close and supportive community...'.<sup>290</sup> Greek city residents rose from around 200 to 700 in the 1950s. Some, like Katina Patitsas, who arrived from Lefkas with her family in 1957, still live in their old cottages, tending tiny, productive gardens growing olives, grapes and vegetables.

Adelaide City Council residents declined only gradually from a peak of 43,000 in 1915 to 35,000 by 1951 but nearly halved over the next decade. The drop was caused by the lifting of building restrictions, by-law changes to expand commercial use at the expense of homes, suburban housing schemes, and the Playford government's support for the building industry through discouraging bank loans for the purchase of established houses.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> D Jones, 'Adelaide bush gardens of the 1950s-1960s', *Australian Garden History* vol 10, no 3, Nov/Dec 1998, p. 7. See also D Jones, "'Of weeds and worms': the role of John Dwight in advancing gardening in South Australia", *Journal of the HSSA* no 31, 2003, pp. 36-46.

<sup>285</sup> Hanrahan, *The scent of eucalyptus*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1973, p 53.

<sup>286</sup> B Hanrahan, quoted in Pierce, pp. 148-49.

<sup>287</sup> Hanrahan, *The scent of eucalyptus*, pp. 92-94.

<sup>288</sup> H Ware, 'Post-war Italian migration', Jupp, p. 618 (including quotation).

<sup>289</sup> S Lunn, 'Saving face: heritage or heresy?' *Australian* 14 Oct 1998.

<sup>290</sup> B Jolly, *Historic South West Corner, Adelaide*, Adelaide City Council, 2003, pp 11, 29 (quotation), also <[www.adelaidecitycouncil.com/council/publications/Brochures/Historic\\_South\\_West\\_Corner\\_Booklet.pdf](http://www.adelaidecitycouncil.com/council/publications/Brochures/Historic_South_West_Corner_Booklet.pdf)>..

<sup>291</sup> Marsden, Stark and Sumerling, pp. 40, 43-45.



In contrast to Italians and Greeks, British and Irish migrants were concentrated in the outer suburbs. (This also reflected South Australian Housing Trust policy which favoured British over non-British tenants.) The main influx of British and Irish immigrants was in the late 1950s and the 1960s, recruited to work at Whyalla or to buy houses at Elizabeth and Munno Para. By the 1960s their highest concentrations were in the northern metropolitan councils of Elizabeth (33%), Munno Para (27%) and Salisbury (25%), and in Whyalla. These areas (and their equivalents in WA) had the highest concentrations of immigrants of one nationality in Australia. Most English, like other migrants, went to Sydney and Melbourne, but their proportionate influence was much greater in Perth and Adelaide.<sup>292</sup>

The tangible heritage of migrant organisations – churches, halls and cafes – is important, as were disembarkation places, worksites and hostels. An equally significant ‘migrant heritage place’ is the private dwelling. A home of one’s own was a symbol of new life and the start of a new identity, combining both past and future. ‘The beginnings were hard but once the first steps of settlement had been made, a deposit been made on a house, and some identity been established, things improved and emotions settled down.’<sup>293</sup>

### *Homelessness*

We paid two pounds a week for the few rooms we had in her house at Kingston Terrace. My mother was disgusted with that accommodation and after Sue was born she said I wasn’t to go back there, but I had to. There was no sink in the kitchen, or running water, and it was very sad ... I wasn’t happy living in this house that had practically no conveniences ... with an old mother-in-law who was very interfering and very devoted to her son... I became quite ill and very nervy. I think it was the tension between my parents, my mother-in-law, my husband and having this new child. I found it very difficult to cope with and I absolutely hated that house, hated living there, it wasn’t my house.<sup>294</sup>

If a suburban family home was the Australian dream, many thousands of dreamers were homeless after the war, when an estimated 300,000 new houses were required, increasing by 40,000 per year. Many young couples shared houses with relatives or built ‘backenders’, or simply camped, as described in the histories of suburban districts such as Woodville, West Torrens and Marion. In 1946 the *Australian Women’s Weekly* described the inventive ways other people had dealt with the housing shortage. All of them could be seen in South Australia: living on boats, and in caravans, army huts, and converted stables.<sup>295</sup>

As in the 1930s depression, homeless people also built hundreds of shanties on vacant urban land and along rivers and beaches, although there were proportionately fewer of them in South Australia than elsewhere because the South Australian Housing Trust provided a significantly greater level of public housing.<sup>296</sup> The

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<sup>292</sup> J Jupp, ‘Post-war English settlers in Adelaide and Perth’, Jupp, p. 429.

<sup>293</sup> I Muenstermann, ‘German immigrant women in South Australia since 1945 – an overview’, p. 9, *Tromso Women proceedings*, [www.skkn.no/WW99/papers/Muenstermann\\_Ingrid.pdf](http://www.skkn.no/WW99/papers/Muenstermann_Ingrid.pdf) Sources for the formation dates of organisations are from the relevant histories, including Internet sites.

<sup>294</sup> Ann Marsden, interviewed by S Marsden, 26 Jan 1995 & by A & S Marsden, 6 September 1997 (Transcripts, S Marsden collection).

<sup>295</sup> *Making history: investigating people and issues in Australia after World War II*, National Centre for History Education, Monash University, Victoria 2003, p. 45.

<sup>296</sup> S Marsden, ‘Housing’, in Prest, Round & Fort, p. 271.

government sent 52 second-hand wheat bags to one Aboriginal family who put them over willow branches to make their shack. 'Would've been fifteen years living like that.'<sup>297</sup>

The government also re-used wartime accommodation: barracks, camps and transportable huts and 300 'temporary' prefabricated 'cabin homes' built for munitions workers at Salisbury.<sup>298</sup> Loveday camp buildings were moved to many parts of the state, although mainly in the Riverland, including a group of seven cottages used to house workers at Berri Winery.<sup>299</sup> Materials were also carefully recycled: the South Australian Housing Trust bought the RAAF Training Station at Mount Gambier, reusing the timber, asbestos and iron in the first soldier settlement houses.<sup>300</sup> Fibro 'emergency' rental dwellings were also constructed by the South Australian Housing Trust on behalf of the government between 1950–53, for people in acute housing need.

Homeless families, migrants and soldier settlers were accommodated in camps. Women found camp life hard as they raised families in spartan and isolated conditions, while husbands spent long hours or days in factories, on building sites or in field work. Jean Nunn's first impression of the Kangaroo Island camp in 1951 was of 'rows of iron sheds, outhouses, untidy woodheaps, clothes lines strung between posts and an assortment of children, dogs and fowls crowded together in a treeless paddock'. Each 'flat' had one wood stove for cooking and heating and a copper for washing clothes and heating bathwater. Open drains carried off the effluent and epidemics of minor infections swept through every winter. 'Making home' tested not only their tolerance of the primitive conditions but also of people from different backgrounds. There was no room for social distinctions, with everyone living so closely for three or four years and flats were divided only by thin partitions, with yards separated by wire netting fences.<sup>301</sup>

Wood stoves and coppers were not restricted to country life and were common in many suburban houses. Newspapers 'bristled with advertisements for refrigerators, washing-machines, heating and cooling appliances, stoves, irons, vacuum cleaners, toasters and kettles', and this cornucopia dazzles even historians but these appliances were quite expensive.<sup>302</sup> Like Barbara Hanrahan, my family remembers not refrigerators but 'the iceman and his watery trail'.<sup>303</sup> For many South Australian families getting a home, let alone the goods to furnish them, was the period's greatest challenge and its most celebrated success.

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<sup>297</sup> Mrs VP, quoted in S Marsden, 'Oral History in South Australia', E Richards, ed, *Flinders' history of South Australia: social history*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide 1986, p. 482.

<sup>298</sup> M Allen, Salisbury (SA) in transition, MA thesis, University of Adelaide, 1975, p. 24 and passim.

<sup>299</sup> Heritage Investigations, *Heritage survey of the River Murray*, 1983, DC Berri, Item Ref No 4.

<sup>300</sup> Marsden, *Business, charity and sentiment*, p. 212.

<sup>301</sup> Nunn, pp. 46 (quotation), 47.

<sup>302</sup> S Lees & J Senyard, *The 1950s: how Australia became a modern society, and everyone got a house and car*, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1987, p. 56.

<sup>303</sup> Hanrahan, *The scent of eucalyptus*, p. 97.

## Conclusion

Much was set in train in South Australia during the 1950s but the results were not evident until the 1960s. We should explore some of these events, especially in Playford's time (to 1965). The most important in terms of state development were the continuing high rates of immigration and mining. Men such as Perry and Playford had worked hard to expand South Australian manufacturing by attracting interstate and overseas capital. One consequence was the decline in the importance of South Australian-based industrialists and the relocation of control and production to the eastern states, which the same men had sought to avert. In 1966, the year after Perry's death, Perry Engineering was merged with the Melbourne firm of Johns and Waygood Holdings.

The whole period was characterised by movement and by accelerated change: demobilisation; migration; displacement; urbanisation; speeded-up transport as horses and bicycles were finally replaced by personal motor vehicles; a multitude of new associations. It was also typified by impermanence as temporary houses were thrown up by homeless families, and by stretched public agencies as new businesses rapidly expanded, and school children multiplied. These features challenge us to locate and preserve postwar heritage, as much has inevitably been rebuilt or replaced by larger premises, or in more enduring materials than the timber, fibro and galvanized iron of the postwar years. In the longer view, even the largest achievements of the time: mass-housing, public infrastructure, modern factories and the carefully-planned new towns and soldier settlements, have already been relegated to the past. They were quintessentially mid-century but the 20<sup>th</sup> century is already history and its heritage in South Australia is being rapidly destroyed.

# Part 3

## Chronology 1946–1959

Year	Event
1945	<p>First atomic bomb is dropped, on Hiroshima in Japan</p> <p>World War II ends: repatriation of servicemen and women begins as well as release of Australian prisoners of war and internees and of people interned in Australia</p> <p>Commonwealth Department of Immigration is established</p> <p>War Service Land Settlement Scheme is implemented, on agreement between the Commonwealth and state Governments</p> <p>South Australian Housing Trust (SAHT) begins to design and build houses for sale</p>
1946	<p>Commonwealth Government gains constitutional powers as a provider of social services, including child endowment, unemployment and hospital benefits and commences subsidy payments to hospitals</p> <p>Commonwealth announces that the power to levy income tax will not be returned to the states</p> <p>Assisted passage for British immigrants is renewed</p> <p>First Australian troops leave to participate in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan</p> <p>Under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (1945–56), low interest loans are provided for public housing (but South Australian Housing Trust does not operate under its terms until 1953)</p> <p><i>Australian National Airlines Act</i> creates a commission to operate interstate air services which establishes Trans Australia Airlines. TAA introduces flights to all of the capital cities by the end of the year</p> <p>Commonwealth munitions factories in South Australia are taken over by private firms</p> <p>South Australian Government takes over the Adelaide Electric Supply Co. (AESCO), which becomes the Electricity Trust of South Australia (ETSA)</p> <p>First South Australian Housing Trust houses are sold (Renmark and Hove)</p>
1947	<p>Motor vehicle registrations reach one million in Australia</p> <p>The first 'Displaced Persons', mainly from the Baltic states, arrive in South Australia</p> <p>Philips Electrical Industries moves from Sydney to Hendon, South Australia</p>

	<p>Long Range Weapons Establishment, a research and development base, set up at Salisbury</p> <p>Severe restrictions imposed on American imports</p> <p>Chrysler takes over Richards Industries</p> <p>Sugar rationing ends</p>
1948	<p>Most Commonwealth wartime controls on economic life are ended – including clothing and meat rationing – and the Commonwealth hands control of prices to the states</p> <p>Commonwealth-funded nationwide anti-tuberculosis campaign begins (in the 1940s. TB was the greatest individual cause of death for people aged 20–40)</p> <p>Full-scale production of the ‘Holden’ begins</p> <p>The 40 hour working week is introduced by Arbitration Court Award (not applied to all workers)</p> <p>BHP announces major investment plans in the Australian steel industry, including establishment of an integrated steelmaking plant at Whyalla</p> <p>Preparations begin at Woomera Rocket Range</p> <p>(10 April) Storms partly destroy Glenelg and Brighton jetties</p>
1949	<p>Australia-wide coal strike lasts almost 7 weeks</p> <p>Sir Robert Menzies (Liberal-Country Party coalition) replaces Ben Chifley (ALP) as Prime Minister</p> <p>Water pipeline to Woomera Rocket Range is completed</p> <p>Commonwealth and South Australian Governments ratify agreement for standardisation of railway gauges</p> <p>M O’Halloran replaces R Richards, who resigns as leader of the South Australian Labor Opposition</p>
1950	<p>Australia commits troops to the United Nations force in the Korean War</p> <p>Colombo Plan is initiated, bringing many Asian students to study in Australian universities, including in Adelaide</p> <p>Increase in basic wage of £1 per week</p> <p>Petrol, butter and tea rationing end in South Australia</p> <p>Plans are announced for a satellite city north of Adelaide</p> <p>First School of the Air lessons are broadcast</p>
1951	<p>Migration agreement between Australia and Italy comes into operation (similar arrangements are made in 1952 with Germany, Greece and Austria)</p>

	<p>ANZUS Treaty signed between Australia, New Zealand and the USA</p> <p>Wool prices reach a record high level (mainly due to Korean War). An Australia-wide wool boom and wheat boom leads to the building of new wheat silos in many country towns (see 1952 for first in South Australia)</p> <p>Daisy Bates dies aged 88</p>
1952	<p>Import restrictions are gazetted</p> <p>First bulk-handling installation for cereals opens at Ardrossan. As a result, large bulk handling storages are built in country towns and at ports throughout South Australia</p> <p>Essential materials for building become more readily available</p> <p>Building of many new schools is underway in the metropolitan area and the country to cope with great increase in number of students</p> <p>Xerography (photocopying) is perfected by the Defence Standards Laboratory in Adelaide.</p>
1953	<p>Port Pirie is the first town outside Adelaide to be proclaimed a city</p> <p>Don Dunstan (ALP) is elected member for Norwood</p> <p>Aboriginal people are removed from their traditional lands at Maralinga area; first atomic explosions on the Australian mainland at Emu Field, Coober Pedy (Operation Totem)</p> <p>Automatic quarterly adjustments to basic wage end</p> <p>Remaining controls on building removed</p>
1954	<p>Earthquake strikes Adelaide</p> <p>Radium Hill mines and treatment works opens</p> <p>Mannum-Adelaide pipeline completed and officially opened by Premier Playford in November</p> <p>Queen Elizabeth II tours Australia, the first tour by a reigning monarch, visits South Australia for the first time</p> <p>MTT announces ten-year plan to replace trams with buses</p> <p>Governor Sir Robert George opens Port Augusta Power Station</p> <p>First drive-in picture theatre opens – The 'Blueline' at West Beach</p>
1955	<p>Factory production reaches higher value than primary production for first time in South Australia</p> <p>Adelaide Airport opens at West Beach</p> <p>Satellite town of Elizabeth officially opened by Premier Playford</p> <p>National Trust of South Australia forms</p>

	<p>Uranium treatment at Port Pirie commences</p> <p>Sulphuric acid plant at Port Adelaide starts operation</p> <p>South Australian branch of anti-Communist Labor Party (later DLP) forms</p> <p>(2 January) 'Black Sunday' bushfires – Governor's residence at Marble Hill is burnt</p> <p>Nancy Buttfield (LCL) becomes the first South Australian woman elected to Federal Parliament (Senate)</p>
1956	<p>Atomic testing commences at Maralinga (the fourth and fifth series of tests conducted by the UK in Australia), and becomes the permanent test site</p> <p>Greatest flood on record in River Murray damages irrigation areas</p> <p>Pyrites plant opens at Nairne</p> <p>Town Planning Committee is established for Adelaide</p>
1957	<p>Centenary of responsible government in South Australia celebrated</p> <p>Barley crop yield above wheat crop for first time in South Australia</p> <p>Legal age for marriage is raised (girls – 12 years to 16 years, boys – 14 years to 18 years)</p> <p>Doris Taylor establishes Meals on Wheels service for aged pensioners</p>
1958	<p>Federal conference of Aboriginal organisations is held in Adelaide and founds the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines</p> <p>Murray Report on Australian universities is made to the Commonwealth Parliament and leads to the Commonwealth assisting the states in financing existing and new universities</p> <p>Adelaide's electric trams cease running, except for Adelaide-Glenelg tram</p> <p>Parking meters introduced in Adelaide</p> <p>South Para reservoir is opened and connected to Adelaide's water supply</p> <p>New Strzelecki Track is made by South Australian Government.</p> <p>Sir Douglas Mawson, geologist, dies aged 76</p>
1959	<p>First women are elected to South Australian Parliament – Joyce Steele and Jessie Cooper</p> <p>South Australia ceases to be a claimant state for special grants from the Commonwealth Grants Commission</p> <p>Sir Thomas Playford reaches a record term as Premier in a British country</p> <p>Full-scale television broadcasting begins</p> <p>Aborigines become eligible for age, invalid and widows' pensions</p> <p>Drilling commences at South Australia's oil exploration well at</p>

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