

The Infrastructure Road to Recovery

Great Water Projects

14. Northwest Victoria



Two crucial projects for north west Victoria were summarised in *The Age*:

The Mallee region

22 April 1998, "Irrigation to boost exports": "A Victorian Government proposal to boost agricultural exports by doubling the size of the irrigation system in the state's north-west has received the backing of a key national water body. The chief executive of the Murray Darling Basin Commission, Mr. Don Blackmore, praised the scheme which would add up to 44,000 hectares to the Sunraysia irrigation area and increase exports by \$300 million. The plan has already been enthusiastically greeted by Mildura Rural City Council.... The proposal to double the Sunraysia irrigation area was out-

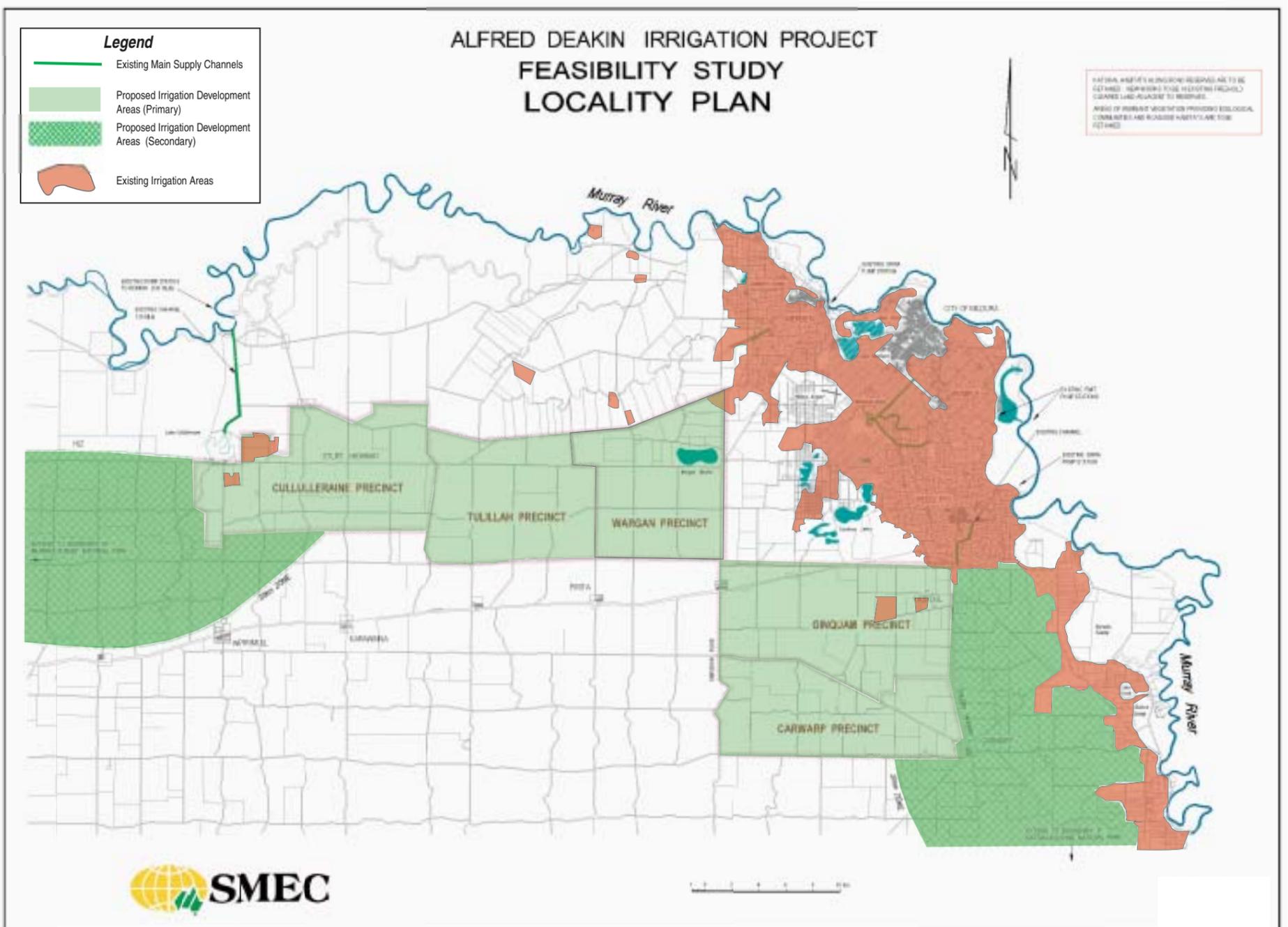
lined by the deputy premier and Minister for Agriculture, Mr. Pat McNamara, at the National Party state conference in Stawell earlier this month. McNamara commissioned a detailed feasibility study by consultants Sinclair Knight Mertz, which showed it would be possible to expand irrigation around Mildura and Robinvale by up to 44,000 hectares.... Mildura Mayor Eddie Warhurst said the project would fulfill the dream of the pioneers of the Mildura area, and gave the local community the opportunity to plan 50 years ahead."

Subsequent feasibility studies in 2001 recommended a much smaller project, to be incrementally increased over the years—an utterly inadequate concept based upon a privatised approach to the whole scheme.

The Wimmera region

23 July 2001, "Push for state to back water plan": "The Victorian Government is under pressure to commit to a multi-million dollar plan to convert 16,000 km of the Wimmera-Mallee's open channel irrigation system to pipes to prevent water wastage. The State Opposition, the National Party, independent MPs, the Victorian Farmers Federation and green groups have called on the government to endorse Wimmera Mallee Water's plan, which would save 83,000 megalitres a year. Wimmera Mallee Water executives briefed Environment Minister Sherryl Garbutt on the \$300 million project last week. Opposition leader Dennis Napthine said the government should back the project, which he said was one of the most important

in Australia.... National Party deputy leader Barry Steggall said the project was first class. He called on the government to conduct a feasibility study with a view to financing works on the Wimmera-Mallee's channels. Mr. Steggall said the project would be one of the biggest infrastructure works in Australia, taking between five and 10 years. 'This would deliver absolutely huge gains to our society'.... VFF water resources chairman Doug Chant said piping Wimmera-Mallee's 100 year old channels was of vital importance to the state's farmers."



With the Alfred Deakin irrigation project, huge new irrigated areas (light and dark green) could be opened up around Mildura.

15. Adelaide

Like those of Melbourne and Perth, Adelaide's chronic water problems could be easily solved through nuclear desalination.

16. Finke River

In addition to his "Bradfield Scheme", Dr. J.J.C. Bradfield also proposed a Central Australia scheme, based upon a series of dams at gaps in the McDonnell-Musgrave Ranges, to store the flood waters of the Finke and its tributaries, the channels of which flow towards Lake Eyre. He envisaged an irrigation project of 500 square miles, just south of Alice Springs.

17. Esperance-Kalgoorlie Pipeline

United Utilities Australia has proposed to desalinate seawater off Esperance and pipe it to Kalgoorlie-Boulder, to solve the region's water shortage, a proposal most effectively done by nuclear desalination. Additionally, in May 2000 Anaconda Nickel announced the discovery of huge groundwater reserves in the Officer Basin 400 km north of Kalgoorlie. Covering around 260,000 square kilometres, Western Australia's Waters and Rivers Commission estimated the basin's storage to be over seven million gigalitres of groundwater of variable quality, with only 14 gi-

galitres estimated as "renewable". Other experts estimate that none of the basin's water is renewable, so that, even with judicious use, nuclear desalination will be needed at some point.

18. Perth/Wheat Belt

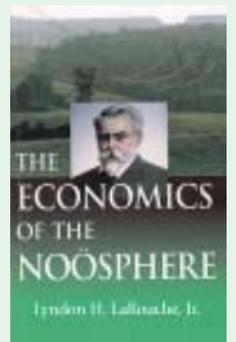
In the short term, if water were drawn for Kalgoorlie-Boulder from the Officer Basin, supplemented by desalinated water pumped from Esperance, this would enable the water now pumped to Kalgoorlie through the Mundaring-Kalgoorlie pipeline to stay in the Perth area. Ultimately, Perth, like Kalgoorlie, will have to rely on nuclear desalination.

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