

The Infrastructure Road to Recovery

Great Water Projects

5. The Reid Scheme



Great Dividing Range, would be diverted into the headwaters of the Flinders, and eventually into the Diamantina. To do this, Reid proposed to build a dam at the headwaters of the Walsh River, a tributary of the Mitchell, and to link this storage dam with nine other dams on the headwaters of the other westwardly flowing rivers, and thence into the Flinders and Diamantina.

As envisioned by Reid, the scheme was to include 275 km of canal 84 metres wide by 11 metres deep, 17 km of tunnels, and 216 km of 1.5 metre pipeline. A total of 7.5 million megalitres of water would be stored in reservoirs, most of which would be bound by the Gregory Range. Dams were to be constructed wherever the canal crosses a river, with three large dam walls of note: The Einasleigh River Dam would be over 6 km long and 76 m high; the Etheridge Riv-

er Dam would be about 5 km long and 60 m high; and the dam creating the reservoir bordering the Gregory Range would be 19 km long with a height sufficient to create a head of 80 m. The volume of water under this scheme could be considerably increased by bringing in the headwaters of the Mitchell, Palmer, Normanby and Laura rivers, but this would mean increasing the size of all canals and tunnels to handle monsoon rains.

Reid also reviewed and elaborated the plans of Dr. J.J.C. Bradfield, proposing to bring the flood waters of the Herbert, Burdekin, Clark, Basalt and Cape Rivers across the Great Dividing Range into the Thomson River.

The Reid Scheme is an inspiring proposal, on the scale of the Snowy Mountains Scheme. As designed by Brisbane engineer L.B.S. Reid in the 1940s, the flood waters of the Walsh, Tate, Lynd, Einasleigh, Etheridge and Gilbert Rivers, which flow west from the

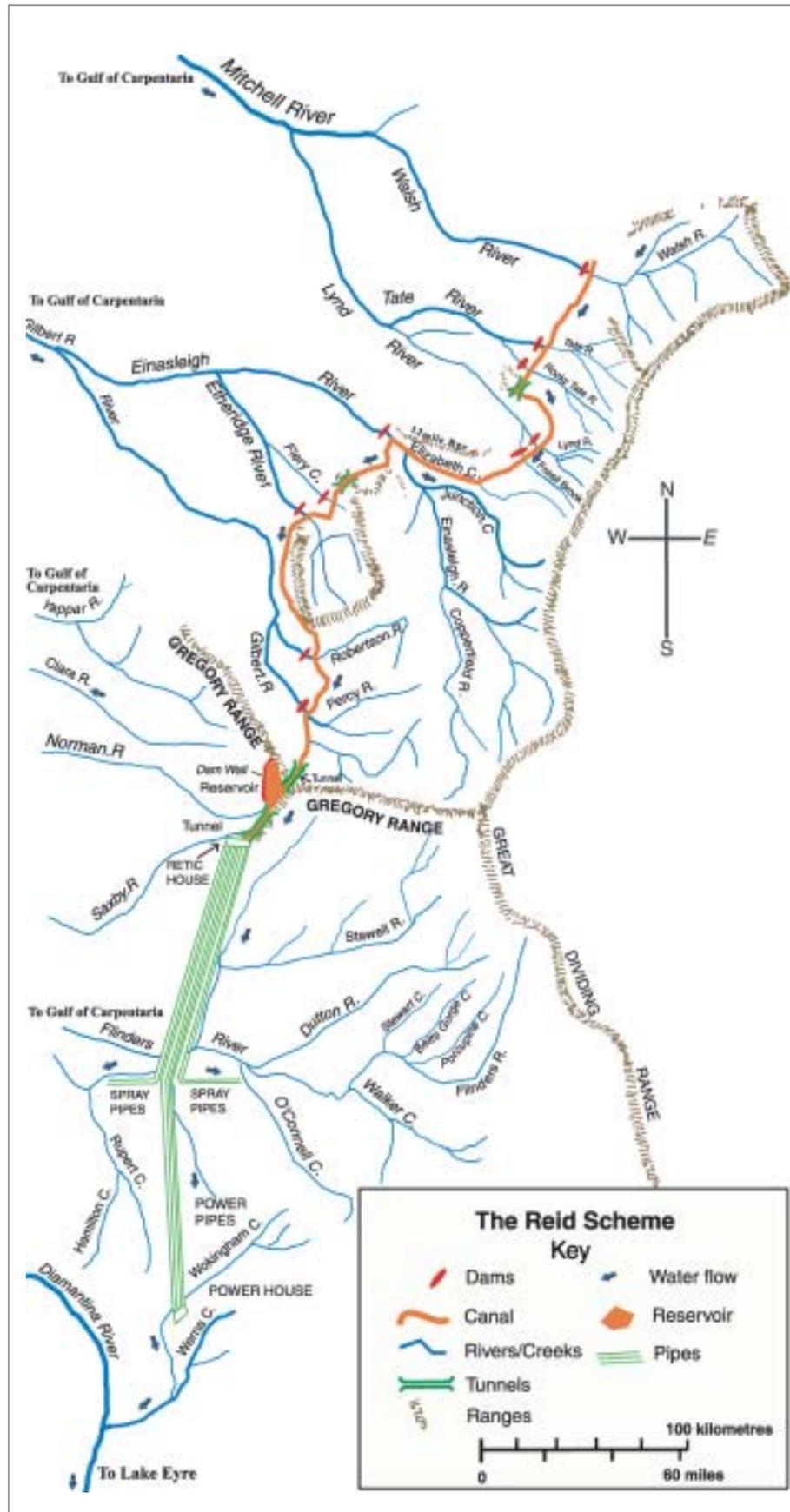
6. The Bradfield Scheme

At the direction of the Queensland state government, in 1984 four of Australia's best-known hydraulic engineering firms combined to form the Bradfield Study Consortium. Their Bradfield Study Consortium Report, together with an optimistic assessment by the Department of Northern Development, was never officially released due to a change of government in Queensland. But in July 1993, all of the relevant Shire Councils of North and Central Queensland joined together to form the Northern Australian Water Development Council, to fight to make Bradfield's dream a reality. The estimated cost of the revised Bradfield Scheme (which called for pumping water over the Great Dividing Range instead of the tunnel originally foreseen by Bradfield, among other changes), was at that time \$2.49 billion. The state of Queensland's Of-

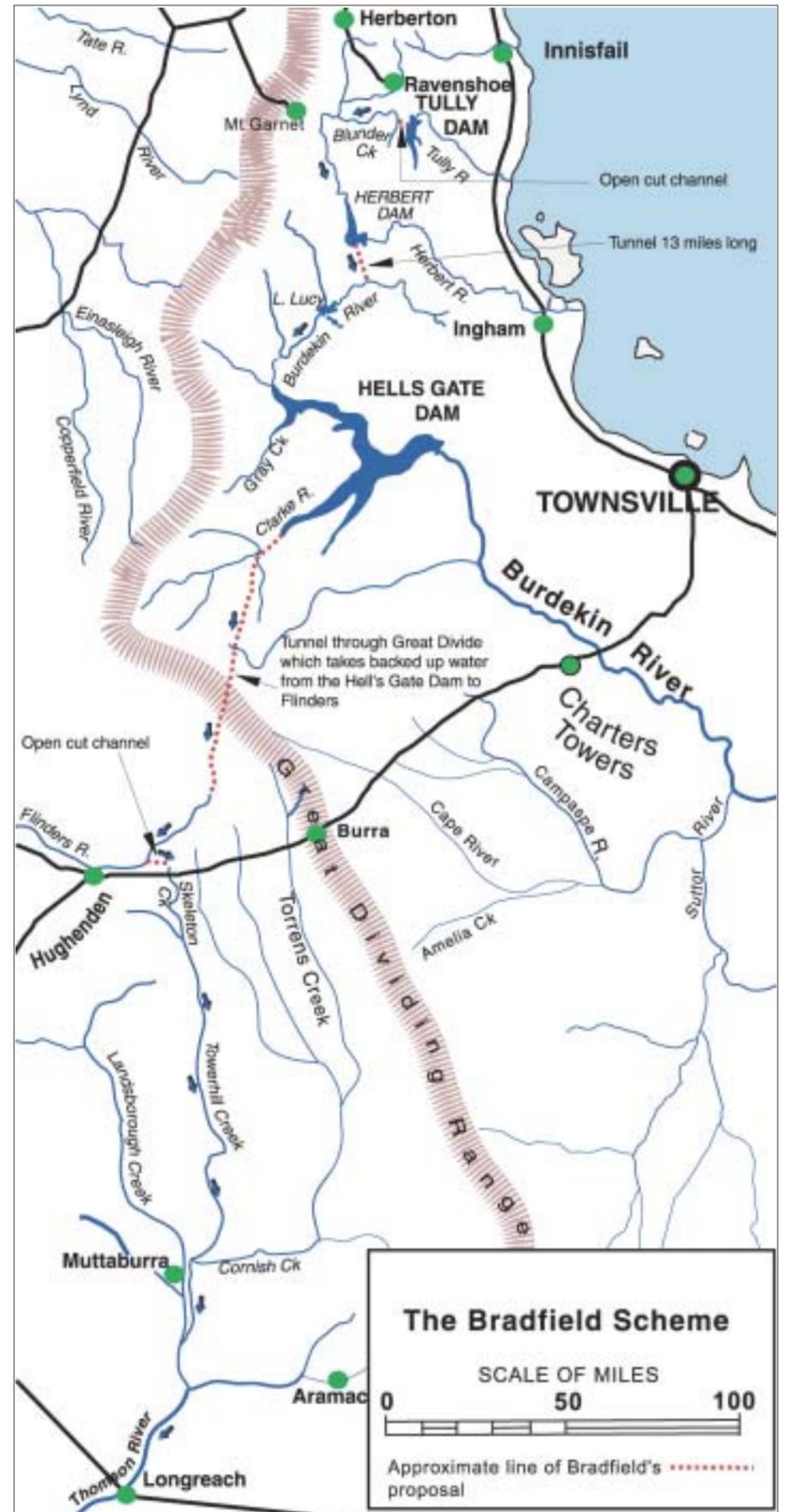
fice of Northern Development projected that the scheme would create \$2.02 billion annually in direct output from the cattle industry, agriculture, etc., not to mention the billions saved in drought losses. Vast numbers of jobs would be created, both in the construction and in the follow-on development of this area.

Since the time Bradfield proposed his scheme, the Burdekin Falls Dam on the Burdekin River was completed in 1987, in the middle catchment of the Burdekin, with a storage of around 1.85 million megalitres. Whether or not the Bradfield Scheme, Stage 2 of the development of that dam should go ahead, under which the dam wall would be raised (it was built to allow for such expansion), which would allow the storage to increase to 8.5 million megalitres above its current capacity.

The Reid Scheme



The Bradfield Scheme



First proposed in the 1940s, the Reid Scheme is a bold nation-building project on the scale of the Snowy Mountains Scheme.

During World War II and for some years later, the Bradfield Scheme was regarded as the logical next step in building and securing our nation, after the Snowy. Beginning in the early 1980s, Queensland MP Bob Katter revived the scheme, in a revised form.