

A sunburnt country?

Australia is the driest inhabited continent on earth. Regardless, our water consumption is one of the highest in the world – over 350 litres per person per day. Historians have described white Australia as having a pioneers' attitude to water – adapt the landscape rather than adapt to it. Is the real issue behind Australia's water crises one of attitudes?

Investigation

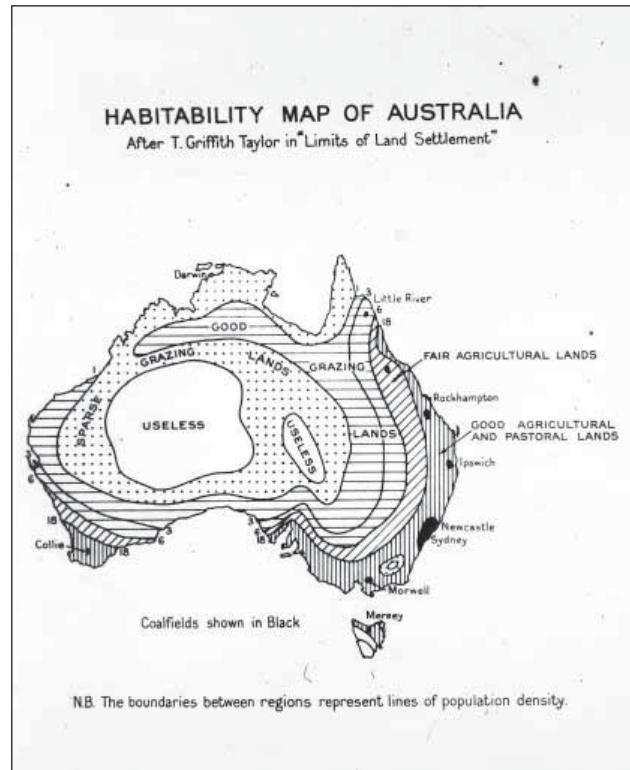
Examine document 1. What does this photograph mean to you? Write a caption to describe the photograph.

Examine document 2. What does this poem tell you about Lawson's attitude to water? Do you agree?

Examine document 3. When this map was created in the 1920s, it was very unpopular with industry and government. Why do you think this was? What does it tell us about how Australians perceived their country?

Examine documents 4 to 6. The media plays a strong role in how we perceive the Australian landscape. What messages were we receiving about the Australian landscape in 1966? Create a list. What bias can you detect? List words and phrases that support your assessment.

Examine documents 7 to 12. Select two images that you most associate with the Australian landscape. Then select two images that represent your ideal Australian landscape. Are the images different? If so, why do you think this is?



Habitability map of Australia

NAA: A1200, L7597

Reflection

Do your ideas about the Australian landscape influence how you use water? Since European settlement, Australians have used more water than the environment can provide. Why is that? What do you think needs to change? Has there been a recent change in how we use water? Provide examples to support your answer.

Extension

Imagine you are in charge of managing water nationally. List five changes or strategies you would bring about. How would these changes impact on other areas of our lives? How would you motivate people to adopt your management strategies? How would you enforce your strategies?

Select a drought from Australia's history, such as the Depression drought or the Federation drought. How did the drought affect people on local, state and national levels? What were people's attitudes to the drought? What were the short-term and long-term effects of the drought? Have our attitudes to drought changed? Use primary and secondary sources to support your answer.

Document 1

Sign pointing to water



NAA: A1200, L7328

River Murray, 1946



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Document 2

A poet's dream

THE BRADFIELD AND IDRIESS PLAN
OF WATER FOR THE INLAND.

"The dream of the poet of the Southern Cross
Will never be realised,
Until the country is IRRIGATED
And the people HUMANISED."

Henry Lawson.

That means WATER and CULTURE - Australia's two most pressing needs.

Handwritten notes: R4 vs 1/1/2, 30/1

NAA: A461, R423/1/2 part 1

Quotation by a proponent of a scheme to water inland Australia, 1947

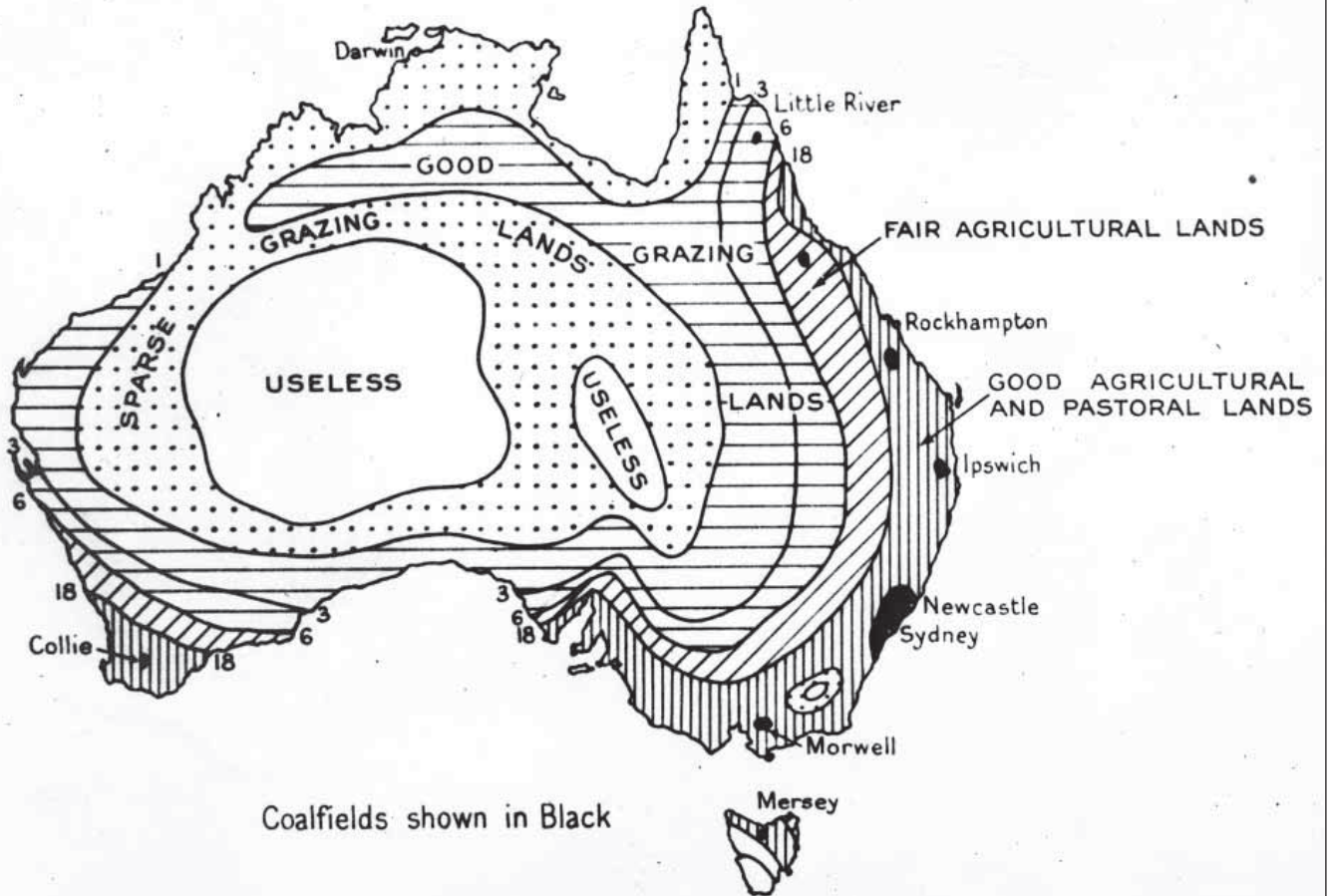


Document 3

Habitability map of Australia

HABITABILITY MAP OF AUSTRALIA

After T. Griffith Taylor in "Limits of Land Settlement"



N.B. The boundaries between regions represent lines of population density.

Produced by a geographer in the 1920s



Developed by the National Archives of Australia www.naa.gov.au

After the great drought what?

After the Great Drought what? ...A SIX-LANE HIGHWAY PAST MURPHY'S PUB?

■ "When past droughts have broken, they have been promptly forgotten—it will happen again." ■ This is frequently said; was believed in the past, but is an impractical philosophy for the future.

What have we learned from the latest drought? What steps will be taken to avoid a repetition of the huge losses in stock and production? No answer on a national basis has yet emerged. Significantly, however, there is a stirring of resolution by inland people, a sober realisation of the increasing gravity of uncontrolled drought.

Rural communities are seeing their future protection in collective effort plus on-the-farm development much in the manner of similar groups in the U.S.A. Vigorous river valley regional groups, such as the Macquarie and

Hunter Valleys in N.S.W., are actively planning for more efficient use of land and local water for their mutual benefit. They are seeing that intensified regional production will attract secondary industry—canneries, food-processing plants, cotton gins, better education facilities, fast highways; will create prosperity for expansive business and commercial centres—thus providing local employment for rural families.

They know that the gigantic agricultural and industrial complex of the Goulburn Valley in Victoria, for example, can be duplicated in many places.

Imaginative graziers along the Darling River in N.S.W., experimenting with irrigated pastures as a drought measure, have achieved startling results and claim that greatly intensified grazing will be possible in normal years.

Thus, if the current mood of self determination continues, the drought could have its long-term compensations in accelerated inland development.

But these inland people also know that local effort, to be fully effective, must ultimately depend on major storages and headworks; that work at farm level can only go part of the way.

The man battling drought on the Darling knows that the final potential of the river may well depend on storages in Queensland. Similarly, agricultural expansion in South Australia will be affected by development works in Queensland and N.S.W. Water doesn't stop or start at State boundaries. Australia's largest river system is shared by three States and crosses the boundary of a fourth. This interdependence of States points quite clearly to the fact

that efficient development and use of water will be limited without an effective national water policy.

Hardie's have used their advertising over the last six years to tell the story of 'The Great Thirst.' We believe that our future and yours is in the unfolding experience of developing a new continent—new in the sense that to date we have lived, physically as well as symbolically, on the fringe of its vast and exciting potential.

JAMES HARDIE & COY. PTY. LIMITED

Hardie's

FIBROLITE PIPES



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Advertisement for Hardies Fibrolite Pipes, 1966



Rivers drying up

Homes will soon have no water

By a Special Reporter

Parched inland areas will lack water even for essential stock and domestic uses unless substantial rain falls in the next few months.

All inland river systems except those in the southern Riverina are fast drying up.

One coastal river, the Hunter, is also drying up.

Many rivers and creeks without regulating storages have ceased to flow and farm water storages vary from empty to only partly full.

Major storage dams are getting perilously low — even those least affected are more than half empty.

Controlled discharges from these dams alone keep our vast river systems flowing, or rather trickling.

These discharges are being restricted to urgent domestic, stock and irrigation needs.

The State Government

has taken drastic steps to meet the great water crisis.

The end of water for irrigation purposes is imminent on the Macquarie, Lachlan, Namoi and Hunter Rivers and irrigation is restricted in most other areas.

Only a dramatic change in the weather can save the irrigation dilemma.

Facing ruin failing really heavy falls are thousands of graziers, horticulturists, vegetable and cotton growers and others who rely on irrigation water for their survival.

Water resources, in relation to demand, are re-

duced to the lowest level in their history.

The State is relying on drenching winter rains and runoff from heavy snow to avert disaster.

Conservation Minister Beale, with officers of the Department of Conservation and the Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission, has tried to counter the drought with measures based on weather information and facts from men in the field.

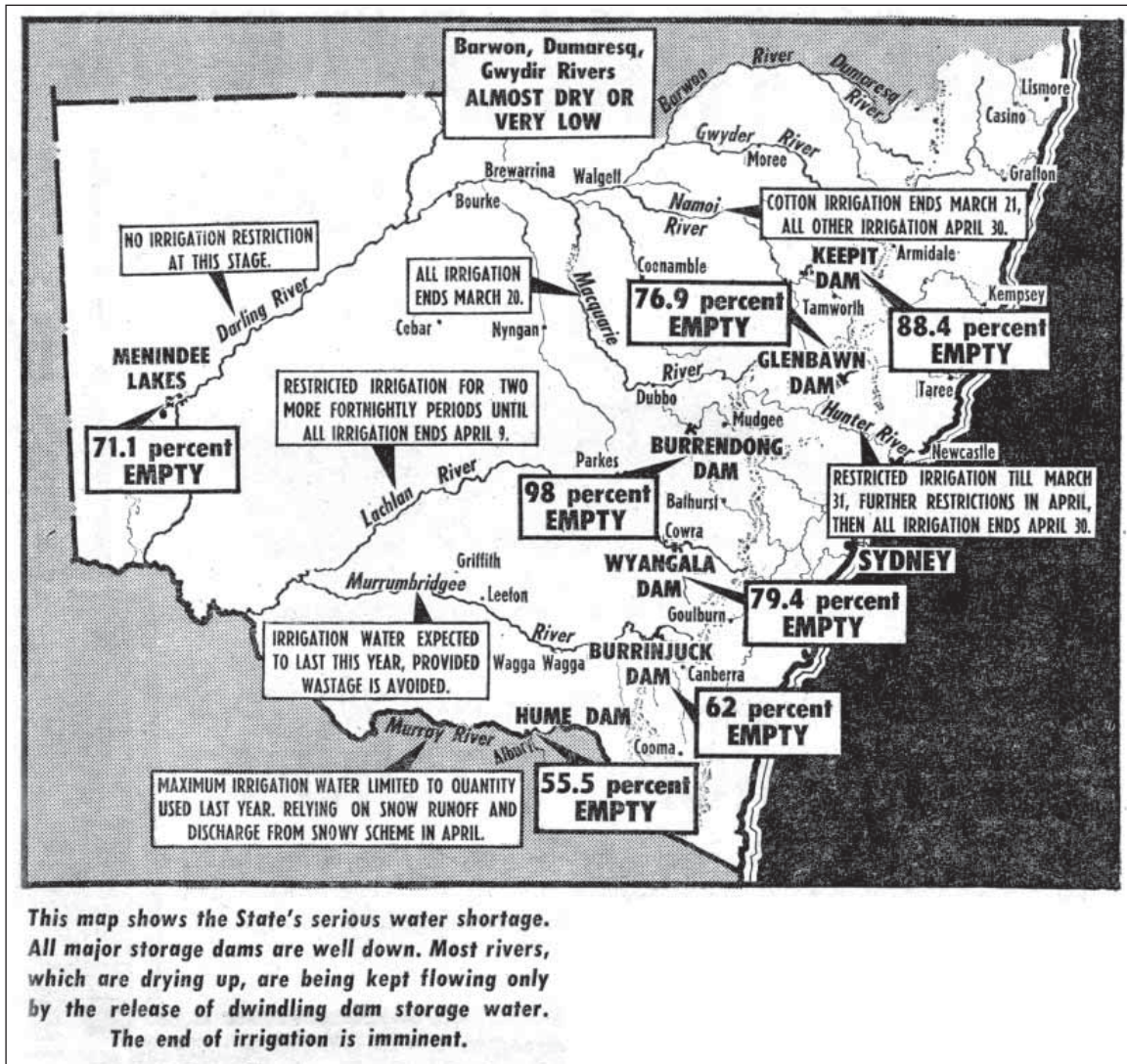
Mr. Beale's grim assessment is that unless substantial rains fall, more than half our major storage dams will be empty by the end of September.

NAA: A2618, document 2331

Extract from article, *Sunday Telegraph*, 1966



Rivers drying up



NAA: A2618, document 2331

Extract from article, *Sunday Telegraph*, 1966



Rain comes to the Centre

I believe that no section of the Australian community has ever had to live through a worse climatic period than that from which the Central Australians now appear to be emerging.

The eight-year drought, they tell you, is not yet over, although it has taken a thorough wetting.

In the last few days I have flown over thousands of square miles of this country. I have seen lakes of water lying everywhere, rivers and creeks flowing, and encouraging patches of green grass.

But I also flew through rising dust that is already beginning to blow again on the still red landscape—in places where flood damage is being repaired. This reminded me that recently I had flown from Woomera to Tennant Creek—about 1,000 miles—without once sighting the ground. We were at 15,000 feet and the cushion of terrifying dust was at 14,500 feet.

Few southerners who have not been here can appreciate what it has meant to be a Central Australian in the last decade. Living with blanketing dust for days and weeks and years has been a fearful ordeal, especially for the housewives. It hasn't helped that many of the storms have not originated in Central Australia but in Western New South Wales and Queensland. They have had enough red dust of their own without having to put up with imported white stuff.

From DOUGLAS
LOCKWOOD
at Alice Springs

At Reners Rock Station the manager's wife, Mrs Judy Reidy, keeps a spare room in its dust-laden condition to show visitors. The rest of the homestead is spotlessly clean. She estimates it takes three hours a day to cope with dust alone. After a bad storm it has taken anything up to eight hours. Every surface has had to be washed down repeatedly.

Dust got into food and even into refrigerators. The children's bathwater turned to mud. This has been the common lot.

Extract from article, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1966



Document 7

Murray River, Echuca



NAA: A1500, K23238

Victoria, 1970



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Document 8

Brunswick River, Bruswick Junction



NAA: A1500, K23263

Western Australia, 1970



Developed by the National Archives of Australia ▷ www.naa.gov.au

Document 9

Kempton area



NAA: A8746, KN22/8/73/54

Tasmania, 1973

Document 10

Hume Dam, Murray River



NAA: A1200, L24434

Victoria, 1957

Document 11
Brunchilly Creek



NAA: A1200, L28552

Northern Territory, 1958



Document 12

Poison Creek, south of Agnew



NAA: A1500, K27013

Western Australia, 1971



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