

Building the MIA

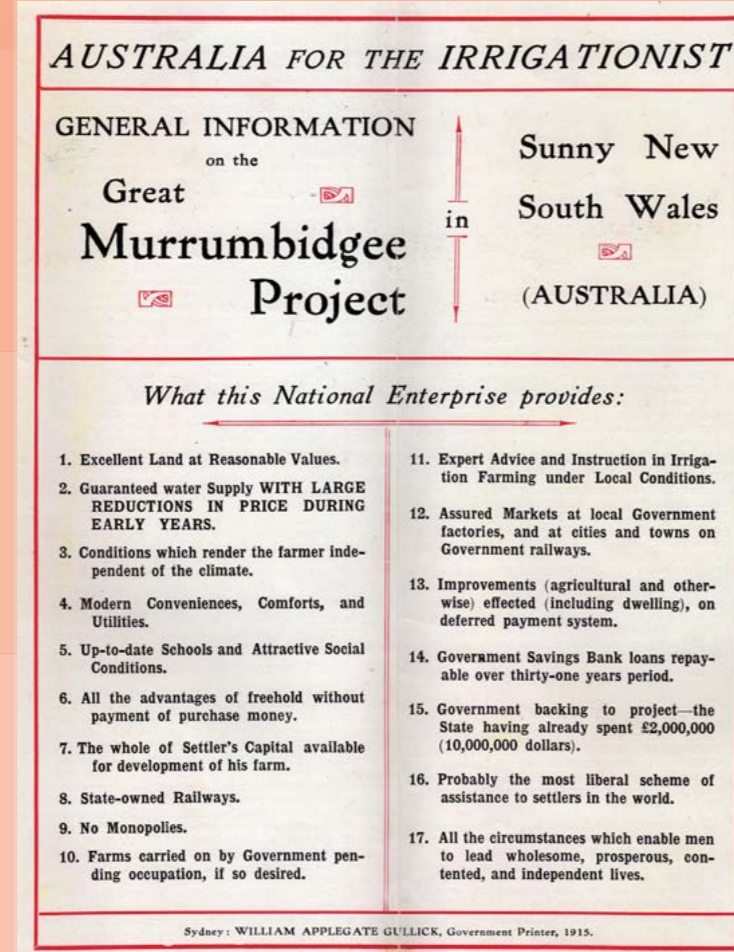
From the 1830s large pastoral stations were established in the Murrumbidgee area, but the area was so drought prone the land could only support four sheep per acre. In 1891 NSW Government officials recognized the area would be ideal for a large scale irrigation scheme. Fifteen years later, work began on the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme with the commencement of the Burrinjuck Dam near Yass.

By 1912 the dam was completed and water had begun reaching parts of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA) via a massive main canal and an emerging network of holding ponds, weirs and tributaries. Major works were to continue for over a decade.

After World War One the MIA became a Soldier Settlement area, dramatically increasing the population of the region. Problems with salinity, the selection of the right crops and disease outbreaks ensured life was not easy for these new farmers.

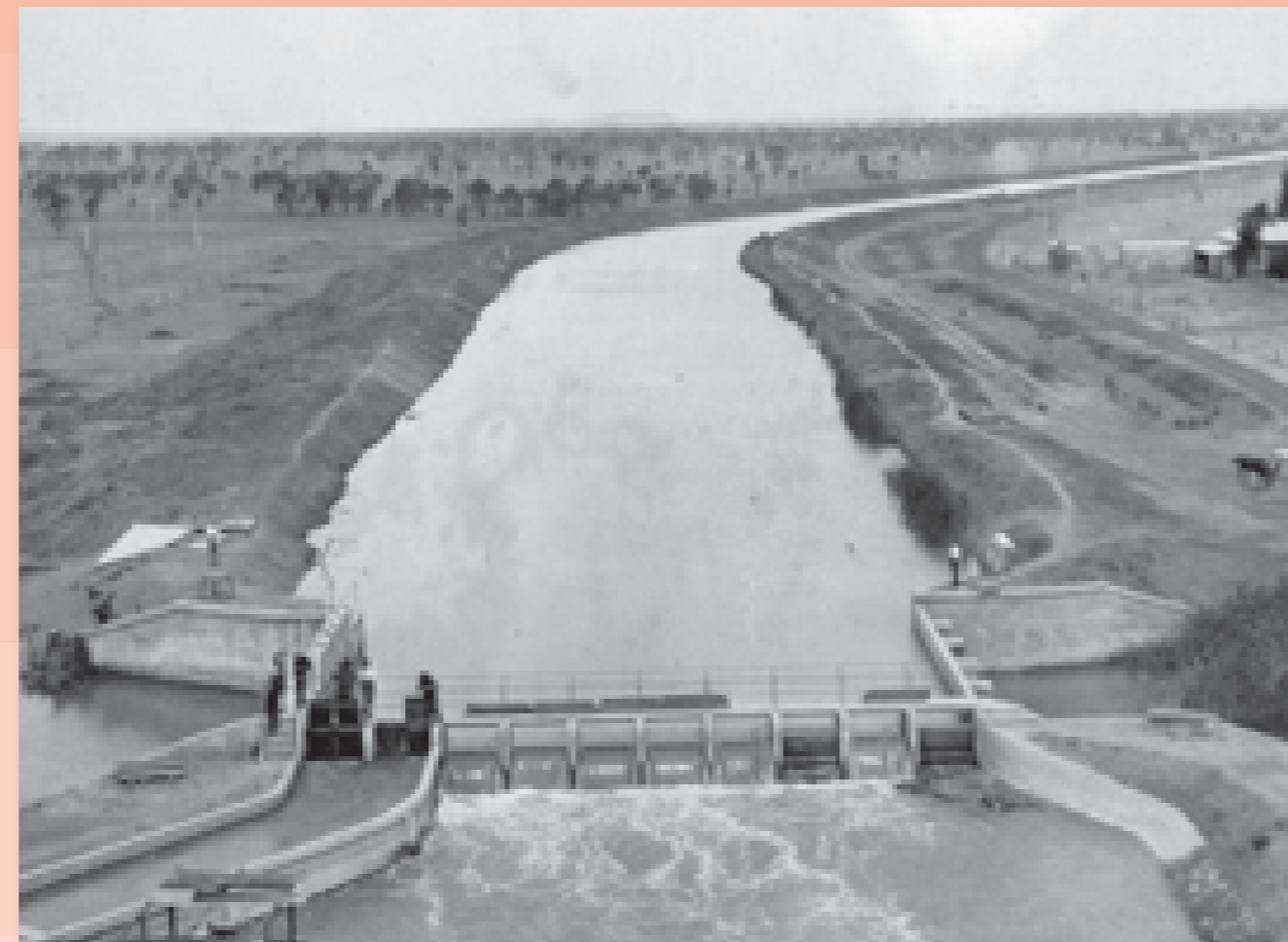
In 1924 rice was successfully grown in the MIA, generating new wealth and an upsurge in farming activity. Large area farmers have traditionally grown a combination of rice, corn, wheat and vegetables, prime lamb, wool and beef cattle. Small area farmers have focused on oranges, lemons, wine grapes, prunes, plums, cherries, apricots and grapefruit.

Today the MIA covers 182,000 hectares with 3,740 kilometres of channels taking 600,000 mega litres to 2,446 farms. The area produces 70% of NSW wine and 60% of NSW citrus.



1. NSW Government promotional material for the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Areas (1915)
Numerous incentives were provided to new farmers including access to subsidised water and financial support to assist with farm establishment costs.

Griffith Pioneer Park Museum Collection



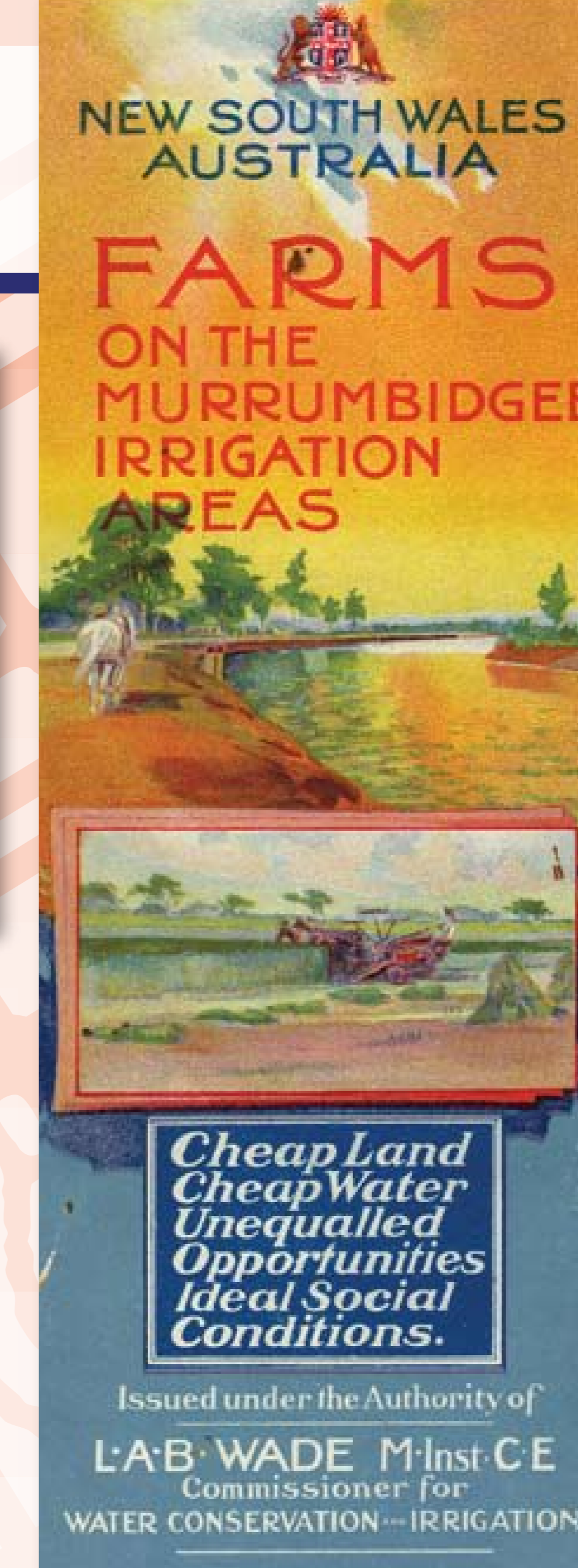
2. The Yenda regulator controls the main canal into Griffith (1922)

Griffith City Library Collection



3. Foreman Nightingale inspects completed canal construction work (date unknown)

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5. The completed picture (c1915)
This promotional photograph of a property illustrates what could be achieved by the diligent farming family

Griffith Pioneer Park Museum Collection

4. Location, Location, Location (1915)
The Commissioner for Water Conservation and Irrigation led the campaign to attract men and women to farming under very "favourable" conditions in the MIA.

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