Collections and Recollections

QUEENSLAND
IRRIGATION COMMISSION.

DAWSON RIVER IRRIGATION SCHEME
CASTLE CREEK SECTION
TOWNSHIP

'WATER' REFLECTS ON THE GROWING OF THE CASTLE CREEK / THEODORE COMMUNITY

REFLECTIONS BY THE WATER RESOURCES RETIREES ASSOCIATION (WRRA)

PREFACE

ABOUT THE WATER RESOURCES RETIREES ASSOCIATION (WRRA)

The WRRA is a social organisation established in 1985 for persons associated with the former dedicated water resources agencies of the Qld Govt., and any succeeding 'water' agencies. At the time of the 'Commencement of Construction' of this document in early 2024, WRRA Co-Patrons were Sunwater and the Dept of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water. Membership in March 2024 stood at 207 statewide, comprising colleagues with past association with the Professional (54%); Technical (30%); and Admin (16%) Streams.
The WRRA warmly welcomes new members.

https://www.waterysauces.org.au/

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

'Collections and Recollections' is a 5-volume document developed by the WRRA between 26 Jan 2024 and 28 Feb 2025 - it is not intended to be an official document. It arose out of public domain research undertaken in 2022 for celebrations by the WRRA to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the passage of the *Irrigation Act of 1922* and the establishment of the Queensland Irrigation Commission, which was soon after to become the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission (IWSC) through a merger with the Water Supply Department. The timing of the document's launch in early 2024 also coincided with the lead-up to the 100th anniversary celebrations planned for 28 – 30 June 2024 by Theodore **(APPENDIX 2)** to commemorate 100 years since the power for the towns electric lighting system was turned on by the wife of 'waters' first IWSC Commissioner (Archibald F Partridge) *'after Governor Nathan had set the engine revolving'* in the power house (https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/20752388)

'Collections and Recollections' attempts to reflect on the unique role that 'water' played in growing the Castle Ck / Theodore community, where the IWSC acted as its first Council from 1922 until 1958 and was heavily involved thereafter. It was open to inclusion of material from public domain collections (COLLECTIONS 1 to 3) or of material from any 'water' people who may have had past recollections of the irrigation scheme and Theodore which they may have wished to share with the broader community (RECOLLECTIONS).

COLLECTIONS 1 to 3

In these 3 volumes, **'Water'** reflects on material researched through public domain 'Collections' such as:-

- Trove Digitised Newspapers
- State Archives; State Library; Departmental Libraries etc
- Dawson Folk Museum, Theodore

RECOLLECTIONS

This volume enabled **'Water'** to reflect and relied on material donated by those who may have had some association with development of community; scheme or township at some stage and who may have had 'Recollections' of their own to share such as:-

- Old Photos
- Old Tales worthy of sharing
- Personal Recollections of events of interest etc

Being a 'living' document until its final revision was deemed to be an 'As Built' on 28 Feb 2025, the WRRA warmly welcomed contributions to be submitted to its Secretary for consideration for inclusion, particularly in relation to **Recollections**. The WRRA also intended that any parties interested in using material as contained

within be free to do so, provided that the WRRA is acknowledged as the source. The WRRA wishes to thank all those who made contributions.

The contributions published in **Recollections** are the contributors' own-sourced information and stories, some of which may include a quoted reference to a 'point-of-truth' (eg News Clips; Web links) and some of which may be solely or largely personal accounts. The views, information or opinions provided in the contributions are those of the contributors and don't necessarily represent those of the Water Resources Retirees Assoc.

MORE READING *'Watery Sauces – A People's History of the Water Resources Commission and its Predecessors 1881 – 1995'* contains a section on the early involvement of Commissioner Partridge and the IWSC with Theodore. It is the most valuable resource available about our 'water' community, written by Ian Pullar and his acclaimed historian daughter Dr Margaret Cook. Ian is an esteemed Life Member of our Association.

https://waterysauces.org.au/history/commencement/pullarbook/iws.pdf

'As Built' – this stamp is well known to those in the 'water' community, particularly anyone who was around in the 'dam-building' days. It's placement on a drawing certified that a structure had been built as designed or alternatively if there was any variation, that that variation had been recorded so that the drawing was a true and accurate record of what had been built. In much the same way, the WRRA symbolically added the 'As Built' stamp to all 5 volumes of 'Collections and Recollections' on 28 Feb 2025, after it was considered that the WRRA had no more to add to the knowledge of the involvement of 'water' with Theodore. The addition of the stamp followed the writing up of a 2025 article in 'Recollections' of a scenario attempting to throw some more light on who was considered may have planned Theodore – 'The Town that Water Built'.

PREFACE

1883 - 2024	'Water' reflects on its Own Journey	**8**
1922 - 2024	'Water' reflects on its Castle Ck / Theodore Journey	**9**
2024	'Water' reflects on the Community that 'Water' grew	**10**

COLLECTION #1 - Progress in 'Water' behind the scenes

1883 - 1890	Early assessment of Irrigation Prospects	**12**
1908	Early irrigation proposals looked at in the Dawson Valley	**15**
1914	'Water' reflects on the Early Days of planning Irrigation Townships	**16**
1919	The staunch support from Premier Theodore	**18**
1920	Putting 'The Dawson' on the map	**19**
1921	The Vacancy of Hydraulic Engineer (Qld)	**21**
1922	***May*** - Theodore takes a closer look at 'The Dawson'	**22**
	August - The Royal Comm'n - Extn of rail line to Castle Ck	**23**
	October - 1st sod turned for ext'n of Dawson V Line to Castle Ck	**25**
	October - Seeds sown to establish community of Castle Creek	**26**
	October - Partridge's backing to build Scheme and Town	**27**
	October - Loosening of purse strings to build Castle Ck Section	**28**
	October - Commissioner Partridge gets 'The Nod'	**29**
	October - Partridge's 1st Assignment - Establish Head Office	**30**
	November - Planning of Qld's Model Garden City	**31**
	November - IWSC Designs of Settlers Cottages	**34**
	December - Partridge builds the Head Office team	**38**
	December - Partridge's two Commissions	**39**

1923	Surveyor peart's Endorsement of the Town Plan	40
	Partridge's plan to open up 'The Dawson'	41
	IWSC Castle Ck Works, Rannes (Dawson Valley Line)	42
	Setting up Camp at Castle Ck	44
	Setting up the Sawmill at Castle Ck	45
	Attracting Settlers to Castle Ck	46
	Setting up Offices; Garage and Store at Castle Ck	48
	Calling of tenders for Pump Equipment	49

COLLECTION #2 - Development by 'Water' of Community, Township and Scheme

1924	IWSC 'Camp Kids'	51
	The Governor's Visit - Official Opening of the Power House	54
	The Governor's Visit - Briefing of the Dignataries	56
	Building the Scheme	57
	'Water' also looks after 'Municipal Business'	59
	Reports from The Settlement	60
1925	Partridge makes 'The Theodore Call'	65
	Partridge's Progress Report	66
	The 'Dawson Sling' and that 'What-Model-Ford' Thing	67
	The Water Tower / Bandstand and the 'Birds Eye Views'	68
	The Town Weir gets completed	69
	Everyone has a good look around	70
1926	The Town gets a new name	71
	The First Release Farms get the new name	72
	The First Release Farms go on the market	73
	Pioneer Settlers purchase and develop the blocks	74
	The 'Aeroplane Sketch' of Theodore Zone under cultivation	75
	'Brisbane' gets a new address	76
	Premier McCormack writes to ~~Canberra~~ Melbourne	77
1927	Theodore becomes 'The End of the Dawson Valley Line'	79
	Settlers Qualifications; & 1/2 Fare Rail Tickets to Theodore	80
	The attractions of 'The Town That Water Built'	81
	The Preliminary Design of Nathan Dam	82
1928	The IWSC Experimental Farm	83
	Theodore gets on 'The Mailing List'	84
	Advice provided to 'Canberra' for response to Qld Premier	86
1929	IWSC Pride in the Fruits of its Labours	89
	'Water' reflects on Commissioner Partridge	91
1930	'Water' reflects on 'The Town That Water Built'	93

COLLECTION #3 - Involvement by 'Water' in the Long Term

1930	The re-organisation of the activities of the IWSC	**98**
1931	Constitution of Lands Admin Board as Commissioner of IWS	**99**
	One of IWSC's Legends - 'Doc' Knudsen	**100**
1932	'The Timber-Crib Era'	**101**
1933	Re-assessment of the Dawson Valley Scheme	**106**
	Formal Declaration of the Dawson Valley Irrigation Area	**108**
1934	The IWSC leases out its Hotel	**109**
1935	The Govt Architect designs the Hotel's 1st 'Alterations'	**110**
	The passing of Trail-Blazer Commissioner Partridge	**111**
1940	The seamless upkeep of Departmental and Municipal Assets	**111**
1948 to 1950	'IWSC Positions Vacant, Theodore'	**112**
1949	Tenders called for carting timber to Binda Weir Site	**113**
1949	'Municipal Business' (Layout of Landing Ground, Theodore)	**114**
	'Municipal Business' (IWSC Gazebo Exhibit, Theo's 1st Show)	**115**
1950	'Municipal Business' (Documenting of Landing Ground Airstrips)	**116**
	'Water Business' (Design of Nathan Dam)	**117**
Early 1950's	'Municipal Business' (Design of Public Conveniences)	**118**
	'Municipal Business' (Public Engagements)	**119**
	'Municipal Business' (Documenting of Hotel Renovations)	**120**
	'Municipal Business' (Design of Waiting Room at the 'Landing Ground')	**121**
	'Municipal Business' (Documenting of Town Water Reticulation)	**122**
	'Water-Joey' Don Hall & his likely BSA and Sidecar Outfit	**123**
1953	Construction of IWSC Single Staff Barracks	**124**
	Crossing the Dawson and opening up Gibber Gunyah	**125**
1954	Calibrating the Pumps at Gibber Gunyah	**126**
	The Sale of IWSC's 1st Watering Hole	**127**
	Investigations into a bridge over the Dawson	**128**
1957	The Perpetual Lease Selection of Gibber Gunyah Farms	**129**
1957	The significance of the address - 'C/- IWSC, Theodore, Queensland'	**130**
1985	Further up 'The Dawson' - The Go-Ahead for Gyranda Weir	**131**
1988	Transfer of Theodore TWS to Banana Shire	**132**
2018	The Journey from Castle Ck to Corporatisation	**133**
2024	Mrs ~~Archibald Frederick~~ Louisa May Partridge	**135**

RECOLLECTIONS

1920	The Birth of a 'Water' and Theodore Old Boy 'from Blighty'	**138**
1923	The Town Plan and it's Authorised Surveyor	**142**
1924	The Castle Creek State School - built by the IWSC	**147**
1927	The Partridge Wedding in 'The Town That Water Built'	**148**
1930	IWSC hydrographers at Nathan Gorge Dam Site	**149**
1946	The start of a Father & Son association with the IWSC	**150**
1955	One of IWSC's Darkest Days on the Dawson	**151**
1990	The team in the 'water' office at Theodore	**152**
2022	'Our Centenary Luncheon' at Hotel Theodore	**155**
2023	*'Attending to the needs of graziers on the Western Plains'*	**156**
	A Proud Mural on The Boulevard - 'The Town that Water Built'	**157**
2024	**100 years** - The addition of the Theodore Water Tower to the National Silo Trail	**158**
	100 years - The Theodore Centenary Official Opening Ceremony	**160**
	100 years - The Invitation of the WRRA	**162**
	100 years - 'Proud We Played Our Part'	**165**
2025	**THE PLANNERS OF THE TOWNSHIP (Scenario by WRRA)**	**166**

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - 'THE LITTLE GREEN BOOK'

APPENDIX 2 - PROGRAM OF EVENTS - 100th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS IN 'THE TOWN THAT WATER BUILT'

GROWTH OF THE 'LIVING' DOCUMENT (26/1/2024 to 28/2/2025)

The following is a record of the document's growth from its 'Commencement of Construction' (26/1/ 2024) through to its 'Completion of Construction' (28/2/2025). Following inclusion of the final revision, all 5 volumes were symbolically stamped **'As Built'**. 'Water' gratefully acknowledges the following sources / contributors:-

	ITEM ADDED	SOURCE / CONTRIBUTOR	
		COLLECTIONS	RECOLLECTIONS
1	1920's - Photos from 3 IWSC Albums	State Archives (14/2/24)	
2	1927 – 'Little Green Book' Superintendant's Letter 1950 – 'Water Business' (Nathan Dam Design)	Dawson Folk Museum (1/3/24)	
3	2023 - Photo of Mural – 'The Town that Water Built'		Malcolm Irwin (1/3/24)
4	1950's – 'Water-Joey' Don Hall - likely BSA & Sidecar	Public Domain (1/3/24)	
5	1926 – 'Aeroplane Sketch' of Theodore Zone 1926 – APPENDIX 1 – 'THE LITTLE GREEN BOOK' 1927 – Preliminary Design – Nathan Dam 1928 – IWSC Experimental Farm 1935 – Designer of Hotel's 1st 'Alterations' 1949 – Layout of 'Landing Ground, Theodore' 1949 – IWSC Gazebo Exhibit at 1st Theodore Show 1950 – Profile of 'Landing Ground' Airstrips 1957 – Perpetual Lease of Gibber Gunyah Farms	State Archives (20/3/2024)	
6	2024 - Mrs ~~Archibald Frederick~~ Louisa May Partridge *(wife of the Commissioner)*	www.myheritage.com (30/4/2024)	
7	1927 – Theodore Marriage of Helen Fitzgerald Partridge *(daughter of AF and LM Partridge)*		Jenny Brownlie-Smith (10/5/24)
8	1955 – IWSC drowning tragedy near Nathan Dam site		Anne Chater (courtesy of Vern Campbell) 18/5/24
9	1990 – Team in the 'water' office at Theodore		Jon Chapman (21/5/24)
10	1924 – Dept of Public Instruction Memo - Castle Creek SS		Anne Chater (29/5/24)
11	1946 – Start of a Father & Son association with the IWSC		Anne Chater (courtesy of Vern Campbell) 29/5/24
12	Note re 'Part 2 – Recollections' (P 2 & 137)		WRRA (1/6/24)
13	1923 – IWSC Castle Creek Works, Rannes	IWSC Annual Report 1922 – 23; & Public Domain (2/6/24)	
14	(1) 1922 – QR turns 1st sod on ext'n of DV rail line to Castle Ck (2) P 43 – Photo of Nippan Rail Siding	(1) Trove Newspapers (2) IWSC 'Little Green Bk' (5/6/24)	
15	1930 – IWSC Hydrographers at Nathan Gorge Dam Site		Paul Martin (6/6/24)
16	1927 – End of the Dawson Valley Line - Terminus Building	State Archives (6/6/24)	
17	2023 – Personal Reflections on Theodore		Malcolm Irwin (6/6/24)
18	(1) 1933 – Formal Proclamation of Dawson Valley Irrig Area (2) 1922 – Royal Comm'n into rail ext'n to Castle Ck (3) 1926 – Qld Premier funding request to 'Canberra' (4) 1928 – Recommendations re response to Qld Premier	(1) Qld Historic Acts (2 - 4) Public Domain (13/6/24)	
19	P 105 - Destruction at the Commissioners Sawmill - Theodore	Trove (28/6/24)	
20	1908 – Early Irrigation proposals in Dawson Valley 1930 – Reorganisation of the activities of the IWSC	State Archives (28/6/24)	

COLLECTIONS and RECOLLECTIONS

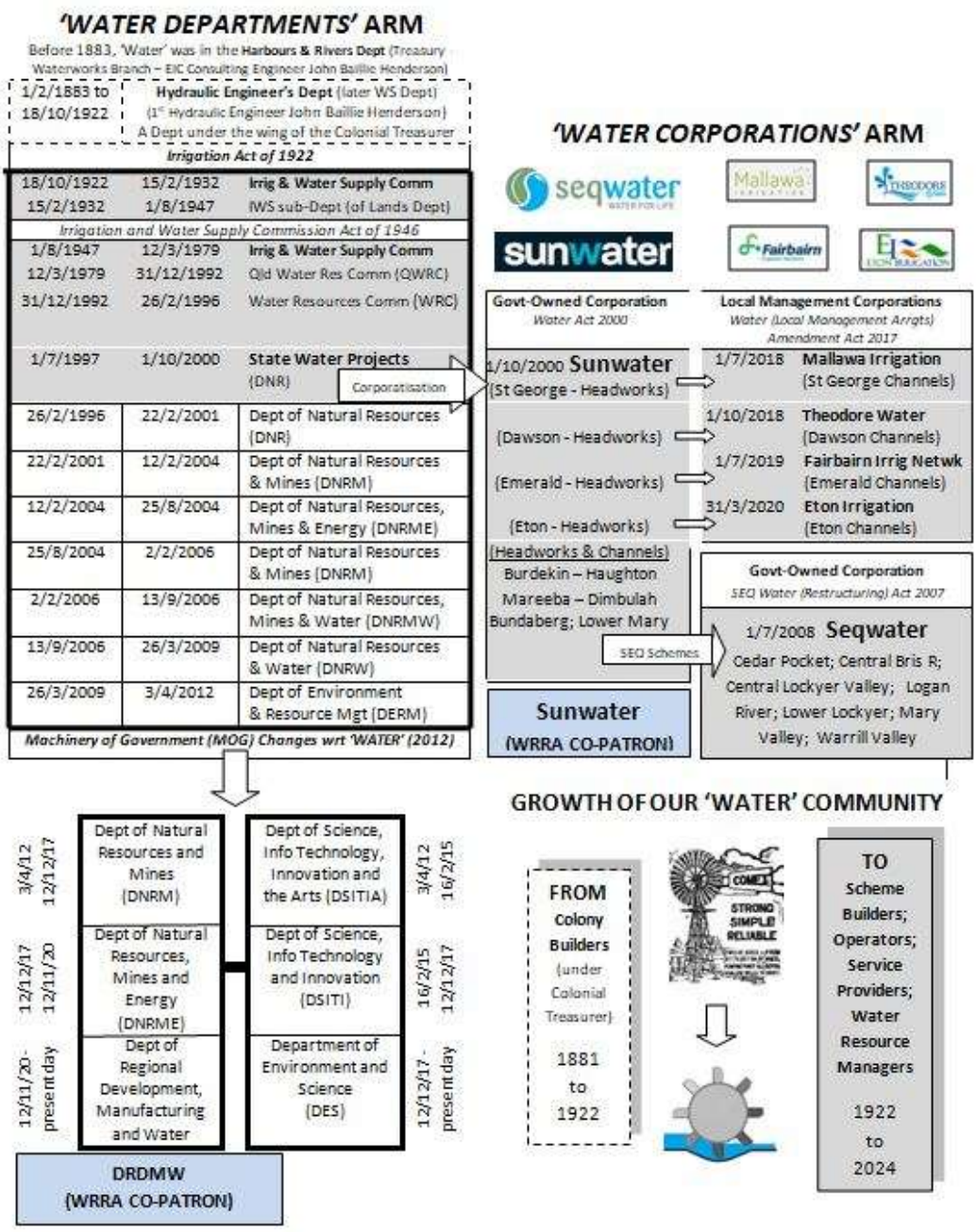
	1931 - Land Admin Board becomes IWSC Commissioner 1933 – Reassessment of the Dawson Valley Irrigation Scheme		
21	1929 – Tenure of AF Partridge's Commission	Book by JM Powell (28/6/24)	
22	2024 – Reporting of Theodore's 100th Anniversary Celebrations		Anne Chater Government House Ed Donohue (13/7/24)
23	2022 – 'Our Centenary Luncheon' at Hotel Theodore 2023 – 'Serving Needs of Graziers on the Western Plains' ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF WRRA CO-PATRONS		WRRA (13/7/24)
24	1930 – IWSC Ambulance Officer 'Doc' Knudsen's 'Ambulance'	Dawson Folk Museum (13/7/24)	
	Housekeeping – Original document broken down into five (5) volumes with the following Titles Preface Collection 1 (1883 to 1923) Collection 2 (1924 to 1930) Collection 3 (1930 to 2024) Recollections (1920 to 2025)	WRRA (13/7/24)	
25	1883 to 1890 – Early Assessment of Irrigation Projects (The Dawson) – 'The Rigby and Mackinnon Reports' 1932 - Plans of Orange Ck Weir	Book by JM Powell State Archives (6/1/2025)	
26	1920 – Birth of a Theodore and 'Water' Old Boy *'from Blighty'* 1923 – The Town Plan and its Authorised Surveyor 2025 – The Planners of Theodore (A Scenario by WRRA)		WRRA (10/2/2025)
	1923 - Surveyor Peart's Endorsement of the Town Plan	Titles Qld (10/2/2025)	
	2025 – **'AS BUILT'** stamp added to all 5 volumes to highlight 'Final Versions' (ie 'Completion of Construction')	Gary Corbett (28/2/2025)	

1883 to 2024 - 'WATER' REFLECTS

ON ITS OWN JOURNEY

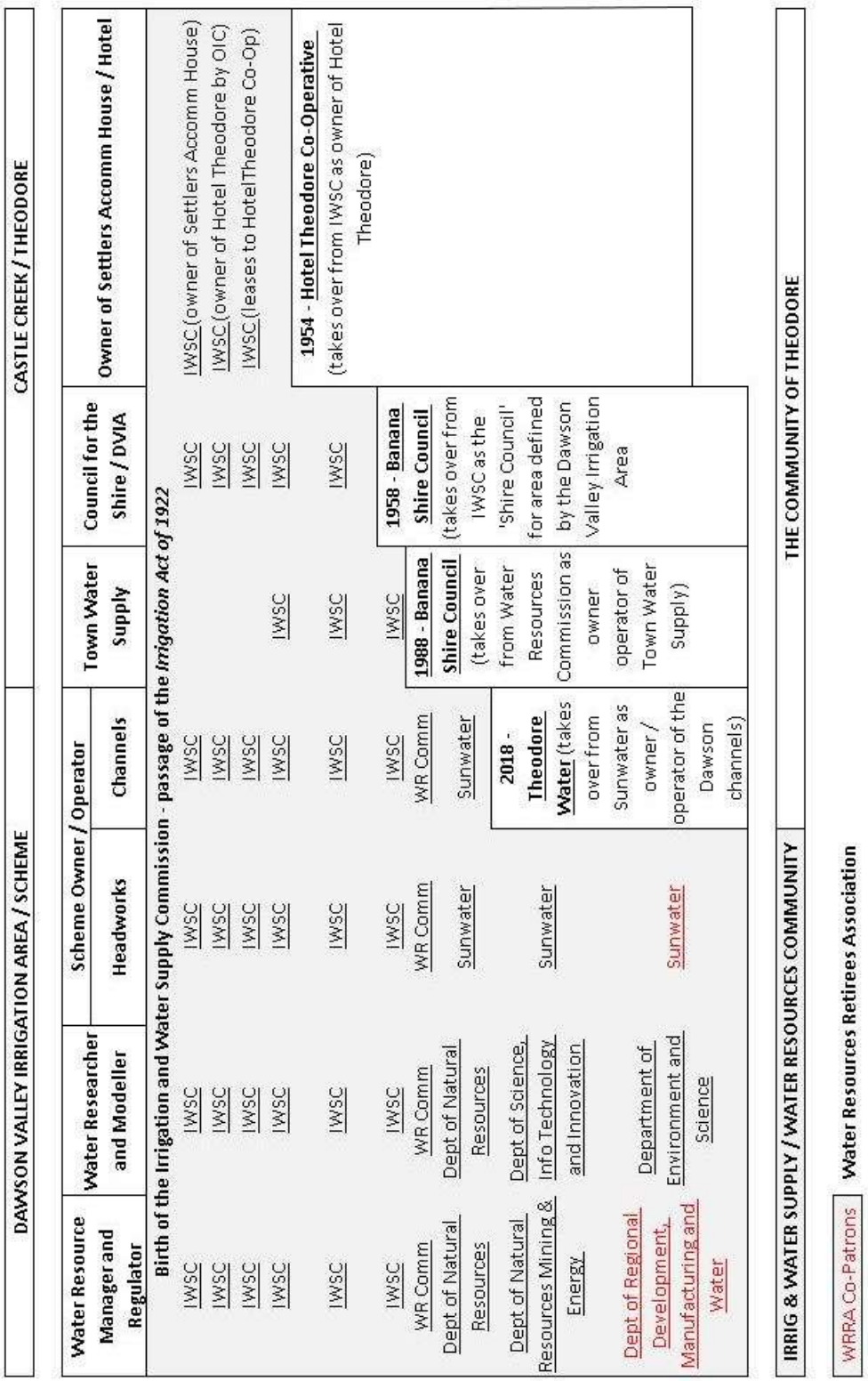
ON 1/2/1883, the Hydraulic Engineers Dept (within Treasury) was set up by the states first Hydraulic Engineer John Baillie Henderson ***– 'to supply public roads and stock routes and to attend to the needs of the graziers on the western plains'.*** It later became the Water Supply Dept which in turn was the predecessor of the 1st Irrigation & Water Supply Commission formed in 1922.

In simplistic terms in 2024, the 'water' body could now be considered as having two 'arms':-



1922 to 2024 - 'WATER' REFLECTS

ON ITS CASTLE CK / THEODORE JOURNEY



2024 - 'WATER' REFLECTS

ON THE COMMUNITY THAT WATER GREW

Many things can be grown with 'water' but the biggest one of them is 'community'. Many examples exist around the state where the ripple effect of 'water' is reflected in growth of community.

The Dethridge Meter Wheel which sits proudly on The Boulevard reflects prosperity brought by 'water' and where the seeds for the growth of the Castle Creek / Theodore community were proudly sewn by our 'water' forefathers in what started out as the Queensland Irrigation Commission with the state's first Irrigation Commissioner (Archibald Frederick Partridge) at the helm.

Two monuments to the wheel in Australia have special significance – the one above and the one at Griffith in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme in NSW. Schemes surrounding both Theodore and Griffith were the first such irrigation ventures for their respective states.

The story of the invention of the wheel is not unlike that of the Hills Clothes Hoist, as it is proudly Australian and somewhat iconic. It was designed in 1910 by Engineer John Stewart Dethridge, at a time of increasing irrigation development along the east coast of Australia. Dethridge at the time was the Commissioner of the State Water Supply Commission of Victoria. In a day and age when sustainability of water extraction from streams was first being raised, the wheel was the first implement to measure water supplied from state-owned irrigation channels to on-farm subsidiaries, with volume of water delivered being metered relative to number of wheel rotations. It was first used in the Murray / Murrumbidgee in NSW/Victoria & not long after in the Dawson and also found application overseas. As well, a specific early design of diversion weir also bears the Dethridge name.

[FOLLOWING ON FROM THE PREFACE (Links to Collections and Recollections)]

https://www.waterysauces.org.au/history/theodore/theodorecollection1.pdf

https://www.waterysauces.org.au/history/theodore/theodorecollection2.pdf

https://www.waterysauces.org.au/history/theodore/theodorecollection3.pdf

https://www.waterysauces.org.au/history/theodore/theodorerecollections.pdf