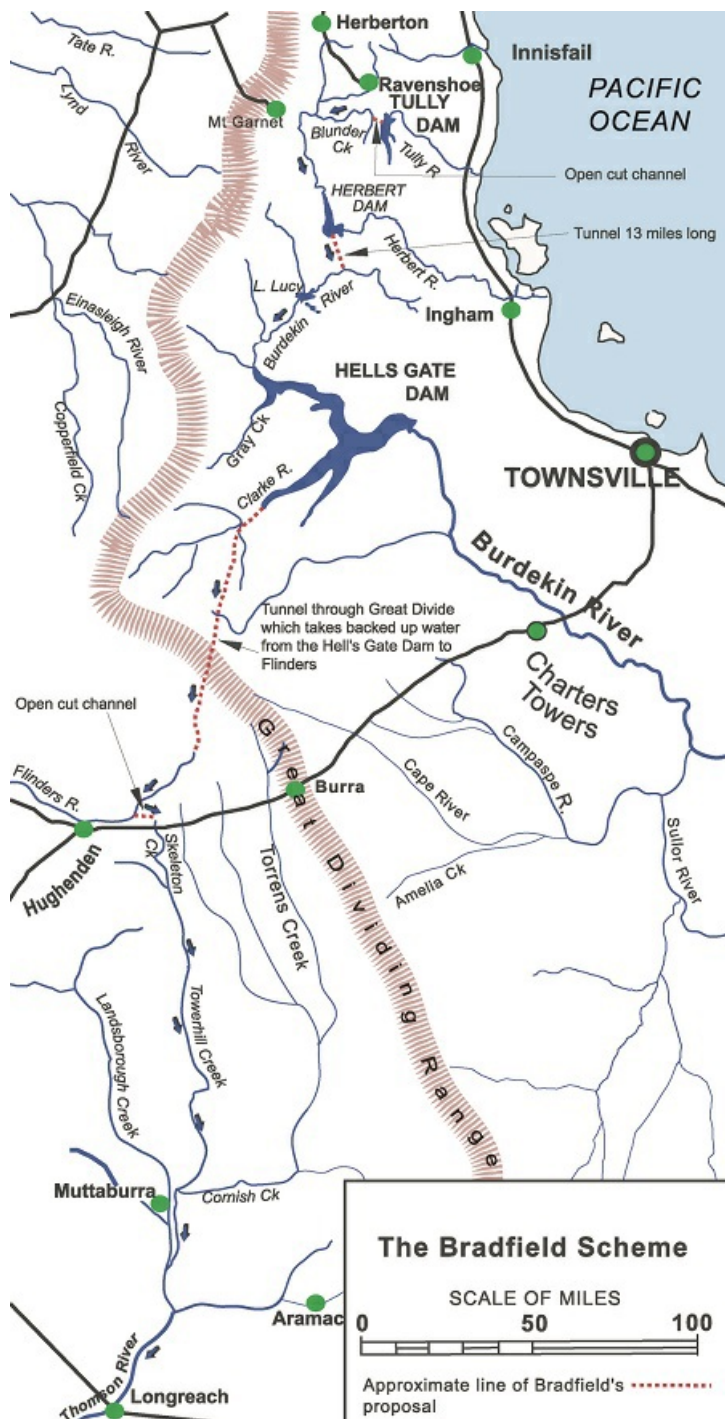


# Support escalates for Bradfield Scheme

Queensland Premier [Annastacia Palaszczuk has told business and industry leaders](#) she is willing to discuss a scaled-back version of the Bradfield Scheme with the federal government. We republish here an excerpt of an [Australian Alert Service](#) article describing the visionary plan.

The Bradfield Scheme, first proposed in 1938 by the great engineer Dr John Bradfield, would transform the continent of Australia, diverting vast volumes of Queensland's flood waters west of the Great Dividing Range, eventually flowing through to Lake Eyre. It would green the interior and open up new agricultural areas that would generate many billions of dollars of agricultural produce. And the potential to improve the climate, moderate temperature extremes, and increase rainfall in Central Australia has inspired many great minds for decades.

Member for Kennedy Bob Katter has long promoted the Bradfield Scheme as has the Citizens Electoral Council, which included the proposal in its book, *What Australia Must Do to Survive the Depression*, first published in 2001. But the fight to realise Dr Bradfield's vision has a much longer history. The Hon William Riordan, Member for Kennedy in Parliament on 14 March 1945 gave a particularly inspiring speech, part of which is worth recounting as follows:



Map of the Bradfield Scheme from the 2002 CEC report, "Australia's Blueprint for Economic Development", republished in 2006.

"The problem of drought is not a new one in Australia. It may be said to be a part of our heritage. Every year some part of Australia is affected by drought. When the country is gripped by a severe drought, much is said and written about the need, to take precautions to meet such a situation; but when the rains come, all proposals for grappling with the problem are put on one side and forgotten till drought recurs. Only last year, this Parliament voted money for the relief of drought-stricken areas, but the people in many parts of Australia which are subject to drought received no assistance from the Commonwealth or from the State governments.

"In time of drought hundreds of families are ruined by conditions over which they have no control, but those conditions might be controlled or mitigated by government action. This Parliament should deal with the matter as a national problem, or it could act in association with the State governments. It is my earnest wish that the National Parliament should deal with the problems of drought and soil erosion in a national way. ...

"During the last parliamentary sittings great duststorms, the like of which had never previously been experienced, occurred in certain parts of Australia. It was stated by the honourable member for Forrest (Mr Lemmon) that those storms carried away the top soil of fertile farms in Victoria and New South Wales, much of which was blown into the ocean. The question has been asked whether there is a dust bowl in Australia. I am convinced that there is, and that it is centred in the Lake Eyre district in Central Australia. Sand from that area has been blown into Queensland and New South Wales, and even Victoria has been affected. In South Australia, many farmers have been forced to leave their homes because of the sand deposited by means of windstorms. ...

"The late Dr Bradfield left valuable proposals for the improvement of the position. He achieved an international reputation, and has left many monuments in Australia, one of which is his scheme for the preservation of our heritage by mitigating the effects of drought and thus saving the people of this country many millions of pounds. If no action be taken to grapple with the problem of soil erosion, the present devastation will continue until the more fertile portions of the continent are affected. The time is long-overdue for a complete investigation of Dr Bradfield's proposals. They were not hurriedly prepared. He himself declared that for 30 years he had given thought to the problem, having ridden through most of the northern portion of Queensland on horseback, and walked over a great area of the country.

"He came to the conclusion that water which now runs to waste into the Pacific Ocean on the eastern side of the Great Dividing Range in far northern Queensland, should be diverted to the western portion of that State. That would make a greatly increased population possible in that part of Queensland, and lead to the preservation of the pastoral industry. *The Battle for the Inland*, written by F. R. V. Timbury, should be read by every honourable member. The scheme outlined by Dr Bradfield appears as an appendix to that book. Timbury refers not only to the Bradfield scheme, but also to the proposals in Ion Idriess' book, *The Great Boomerang*, and urges that the Government should take action to implement those schemes. I hope that the Government will, as soon as possible, appoint a committee, if not a royal commission, of expert and practical men for the purpose of investigating the proposals of Bradfield and Idriess. ...

"Dr Bradfield first proposed that the floodwaters of the Tully, Herbert, Burdekin and Clarke rivers, at about the 1,400-foot level on the coastal side of the Great Dividing Range in north Queensland, should be diverted. Today those waters rush away to the Pacific Ocean and no use is made of them. At present those rivers are in flood. The flood in the Clarke River is 50 feet high, and the people at Wyandotte Station have been forced to leave the homestead, because of the rapid rise of the river level. Rail and road traffic has been dislocated. Ten spans have been washed from one bridge.

"Dr Bradfield suggested that these waters, taken at the 1,400-foot level, should be diverted by means of a tunnel to Western Queensland. They could thus be directed to the head waters of the Flinders River, which flows in a westerly direction, thus filling all the water courses and storage basins from Hughenden through Winton and Longreach, and down through Central Australia towards Lake Eyre. It was suggested that the tropical downpours experienced in far northern Queensland should be utilised, so that the conserved water could be used in some of the finest pastoral country in Queensland. One recalls the valuable work done by the Chaffey brothers along the river Murray. Ernestine Hill in her book *Water into Gold*, tells the story of their trials and tribulations and the success, which they eventually achieved. ...

"Dr Bradfield thought that the water should be stored above ground. He contended that the terrific heat in that part of Australia would evaporate an enormous quantity of the stored water and that it would fall as rain. Dr Bradfield's conclusions have been supported by Mr E. T. Quayle, an Australian scientist, who has investigated rainfall problems and has made a study of inland Australia. Dr Griffith Taylor, of the Commonwealth Bureau of Meteorology, in his Atlas of Contour and Rainfall Map of Australia, issued by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research in 1918, also supports the contention of Mr Quayle and Dr Bradfield that the enormous evaporation from large bodies of water will inevitably precipitate rain and bring about a humidity from which dew would be precipitated to the benefit of vegetation. ... Living conditions would then be much more tolerable than they are at the present time, particularly in the summer months of the year."

Excerpted from "Support escalates for Bradfield Scheme", by Jeremy Beck, *Australian Alert Service* 13 February 2019

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