

In the early years of settlement, Adelaide relied heavily on the River Torrens as its principal source of water. Thorndon Park, South Australia's first reservoir supplied water to Adelaide in 1860. Soon more water was needed to supply Adelaide's growing population and other areas of the State.

BUILDING ADELAIDE

SA WATER - CELEBRATING 150 YEARS



150 YEARS
1860 2010

Thorndon Park Reservoir. 1889

Ref: B 1662
Photograph courtesy of the
State Library of South Australia

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In the 21st century we take the ready supply of water for granted, but it wasn't always as easy as turning on a tap.

At the time of white settlement in 1836, the River Torrens supplied Adelaide with water. Water had to be manually carted from the River and delivered to Adelaide's households and businesses in specially designed carts.

In 1852, the 11,000 residents of Adelaide paid water carters £8548 annually for impure water to be delivered to their properties.

In addition to being the source of water for Adelaide, the River Torrens was also used to dispose of commercial and industrial waste, sewage, for bathing and for washing clothes. This led to

outbreaks of disease caused by poor water quality and lack of sanitation.

Water-borne diseases like typhoid, cholera and dysentery gripped the city and residents turned to the Waterworks and Drainage Commission (now SA Water) to design and build a clean, reliable water source to serve Adelaide.

By 1860 Adelaide received its first supply of reticulated water from the new reservoir at Thorndon Park. Another two reservoirs followed with the completion of Hope Valley reservoir in 1872 and Happy Valley reservoir in 1897.

In the 21st century, water is supplied from the Mount Lofty Ranges catchments into these reservoirs and

supplemented with water from the River Murray. More than 8773 kilometres of water pipes deliver water to Adelaide's metropolitan area.



Above left - Happy Valley Waterworks - end of outlet tunnel. C1900.

Above middle - Happy Valley Waterworks - outlet tower. C1900.

Top - View of early settlement in Adelaide with the Mount Lofty Ranges in the background. Drawing by Samuel Calvert. Ref: B 1134
Courtesy of the State Library of South Australia

Above - Water carting
Port Adelaide's water-supply in the early 1860s.