

CHAPTER ELEVEN

BOUQUETS AND BRICKBATS

"Over the thirty years as a soldier settler ... I consider myself a success. My wife and I reared and educated the family and got ourselves out of debt".

Interview with Eric Pumpa, a settler on the Cuan Estate near Scone by Margaret Walsh, 1991.

Phase II of the scheme for ex-servicemen from 1950 to 1960 saw a marked reduction in land settlement activity. This was not due to the fact that R.G. Menzies' Liberal-Country Party Coalition had replaced the wartime Labor Government in 1949. Indeed, Menzies had incorporated many of Labor's ideals into his platform. The new members on the front bench were grateful that they had inherited a good basis for settlement, albeit a complex arrangement with two differing schemes for Principal and Agent states. Rather the reduction in settlement was necessitated by a severe bout of inflation which surprised the nation as it emerged from sales restrictions and price control. A further contributor was the unforeseen and massive rise in wool prices 1950-51, which forced the Federal Government to reduce loan funding to the states in an attempt to reverse the trend. For example, the New South Wales' total loan programme for 1951 was cut from 83 million pounds to 64 million pounds.¹ The result was that budget allocations for ex-servicemen's farms in New South Wales were slashed dramatically from 3 million pounds to 1.5 million pounds.²

¹ *SMH*, 2 October 1951, p.2.

² *Ibid.* Victoria and Queensland also reduced the percentage of funds spent. Agent states maintained a better percentage because of greater Commonwealth control and funding.

183 (a)

Eric Pumpa and his family shortly after their arrival on the Cuan Estate

The family took up residence in an old house on their block for the initial period
c. 1959



In a bid to stimulate WSLS in the Principal states the Commonwealth desperately sought a compromise. Inevitably, the states were forced to deviate slightly from the principles of settlement laid down in 1945 so that the scheme could proceed. "Bouquets and Brickbats" examines the strengths and weaknesses of the scheme in both Principal and Agent states in order to ascertain if WSLS honoured its commitment to the ex-servicemen. It investigates why some of the principles of settlement were slowly eroded. Did the Commonwealth gain a better re-establishment result in Agent states where it maintained greater control? More importantly, how did this slow infiltration of compromised idealism affect individuals: the men and their wives who retained the dreams of World War I returned soldiers in order to leave the city and go to the bush?

In New South Wales the policy of granting copious qualification certificates, well in excess of what the state could settle under the terms of the WSLS Agreement of 1945, was a gross deviation from the principles of settlement. When the scheme was near completion in mid-1959, the *Sydney Morning Herald* declared with a cynical tone that New South Wales had managed to place a "miserable" 15.5 percent of its qualification holders on farms. The newspaper claimed that this figure did not compare favourably with the Agent state percentages of Tasmania 51.4 percent, Western Australia 37.4 percent and South Australia 29.1 percent. It was an extremely poor result when examined against the Principal states of Queensland at 22.6 percent and Victoria 22 percent.³

But what the article failed to establish was that all the states had differing criteria for qualification. Therefore, these figures should not have been used as an indicator of settlement efficiency or success for Principal or Agent states.

³ *Ibid.*, 3 July 1959, p.8.

The article did not point out that Queensland's results reached the acceptable percentage of 22.6 because that state had cautiously approved only 1,739 men. New South Wales had exacerbated its settlement problems by its irresponsible action in approving far too many qualifiers. At 30 June 1953 it had qualified 18,938 servicemen, Victoria 10,792 while the Agent states had approved 2,796 in South Australia, 1,593 in Western Australia and 323 in Tasmania.⁴ It is little wonder that D.E. Fairbairn, a Liberal Member of the New South Wales Parliament, stated "far too many certificates had been issued too easily" in comparison with other states.⁵ New South Wales conveniently forgot the directive of the RRC in the conclusion of their Second Report concerning the need "for careful selection of the settlers".⁶ With on-going legal problems of land acquisition in New South Wales, aggravated by the build-up of antagonism between the state government and large landholders, it was unrealistic to imagine that New South Wales could settle nearly 20,000 men on the land.⁷ The figures for Agent states do indicate that a better ratio of settlement to applicants occurred when the Federal Government undertook greater financial responsibility.

The large eastern states paid very dearly for their Principal status and the independence which that bestowed. Three ex-service organisations in New South Wales strongly protested to the state government when the budget for land settlement was slashed. They used the unrealistic and rather tired argument that 1,700 ex-servicemen still required settlement. Their plea was to receive little sympathy. A rapid change in attitude had emerged in the community with the arrival of a new decade and new priorities. City and town dwellers had noted the exceptional wool prices of the early 1950s and concluded that settlers were more fortunate than their urban counterparts, and now they enjoyed a position of greater privilege.

⁴ *NSWPD*, 6 October 1953, C. Cutler, p.1033.

⁵ *SMH*, 15 October 1953, p.4.

⁶ RRC's Second Report, *Settlement and Employment of Returned Men on the Land*, January 1944, p.46.

⁷ The qualification figure for New South Wales reached 19,339 by June 1957.

The backlash, so feared by John Dedman when he was Minister for Post-war Reconstruction, had now eventuated so that by the early 1950s it was only the ex-servicemen's organisations and a few politicians representing country electorates who were concerned about WSLS.⁸ Politically it was an issue to be handled with care.

After four years of financial responsibility the Principal states freely admitted that they were disadvantaged in comparison with the Agent states. Hefty loan cuts imposed by the Commonwealth gave them a wonderful excuse for reducing the percentage of expenditure on WSLS. If the settlement budget was cut severely, then perhaps the Principal states could bludgeon the Federal Government into making an increased contribution towards re-establishment on the land.

The Federal Minister responsible for WSLS, W. Kent Hughes, Minister for the Interior, accepted the premise that cuts in land settlement opportunities in the Principal states were likely to rebound on the Federal Government unless the true position was clarified and improved. It was too easy for the Principal states to blame the Federal Government for their reduced emphasis on land settlement. In addition, the complete cessation of WSLS in Queensland indicated to the Federal electorate that the scheme was breaking down.⁹ Indeed, this was a fair comment on the situation in Queensland because the Commonwealth was powerless to intervene. Queensland's stand irked Country Party members within the Federal Coalition. With excellent commodity prices and a renewed emphasis on "growing more food" to feed the developing world, the Federal Minister became increasingly concerned. In addition, the New South Wales figures did not compare favourably with the massive funding that the State of Victoria had injected into its scheme initially. The following table indicates the percentage of loan funds appropriated for WSLS.

⁸ R. Smallwood, *Hard to Go Bung: World War II Soldier Settlement*, Melbourne, 1992, p.52.

⁹ CPD, 25 September 1953, Member for Grayndler, F. Daly, p.701.

TABLE 11.1

LOAN FUNDS APPROPRIATED FOR WSLs BY PRINCIPAL STATES

Date	Loan Funding	NSW %	VIC %	Q'LD %
1946-47		8.5	45.8	2.51
1947-48		12.5	65.0	1.6
1948-49		27.7	27.7	1.9
1949-50		14.7	32.5	3.2
1950-51		11.2	17.0	2.7
1951-52		6.2	10.0	1.6
1952-53		2.8	7.2	2.6

Source: *CPD*, 25 September 1953, p 699

In November 1952 Kent Hughes requested that the appropriate state ministers from the Principal states attend a conference. He suggested that extra finance would be available in return for greater control of the scheme by the Commonwealth.¹⁰ But the response from the Principal states was unanimous. They were not prepared to trade autonomy for extra finance, even though they were fully aware of their disadvantaged status in comparison with the monetary benefits enjoyed by Agent states. Victoria was particularly incensed. Settlement in that state was undertaken by the Soldier Settlement Commission which had been placed outside the Public Service.¹¹ The Commission was chaired by Les Simpson, a man dedicated to the task of promoting land settlement in Victoria. He and his fellow Commissioners, Harry Holmberg and Barney King, were not frightened by a protracted skirmish with the Federal Minister if they believed that the issue warranted such a stand.

¹⁰ *CPD*, 25 September 1953, Member for Lilley, B. Wight, p.700.

¹¹ Unlike the NSW attempt to run land settlement outside the public service following World War I, this Commission obtained extremely good results.

They were all members of the RSL and had strong backgrounds in agriculture. Their main desire was to help ex-servicemen participate in the agricultural growth of Victoria. The Commission feared that their successful policy of single unit farms was incompatible with the Agent status which the Commonwealth was proposing. Also, Victoria's lone stand for freehold tenure for settlers would create further difficulties.

Following the March and September conferences of 1953 when the states rejected the Commonwealth's offer, the Queensland Minister for Lands issued a press statement announcing that the Queensland Government would "drop war service land settlement" because it was not receiving appropriate funding from the Commonwealth.¹² It would be discontinued in favour of closer settlement for civilians and ex-servicemen alike.

With negotiations stalled, the Commonwealth tried coercion. An offer was made in 1954 to finance one pound for each two pounds spent on WSLS repayable over fifty three years, up to a maximum of 2,000,000 pounds per annum each for Victoria and New South Wales and 1,000,000 pounds for Queensland.¹³ The offer was accepted by Victoria and New South Wales, but flatly rejected by Queensland. As a result WSLS was undertaken in the two large Principal states under the new funding arrangements.

TABLE 11.2

TOTAL EXPENDITURE (INCLUDING ADVANCE) FOR NSW AND VICTORIA

	1955-56	1956-57	1957-58
NSW	1,570,139	1,611,017	1,710,277
VIC	1,610,000	1,584,928	2,003,780

Source: *CPD*, 19 August 1958, p.523.

¹² *CPD*, 25 September 1953, B. Wight, p.700.

¹³ Smallwood, *op. cit.*, p.200.

Nevertheless, the table indicating Commonwealth capital expenditure in Agent states shows that they too continued to expand during this period.

TABLE 11.3

COMMONWEALTH CAPITAL EXPENDITURE IN AGENT STATES

Year	South Australia	Western Australia	Tasmania
1955-56	1,587,442	2,827,127	1,559,969
1956-57	1,673,123	3,397,063	1,957,580
1957-58	1,784,864	3,389,399	2,098,222

Source: *CPD*, 19 August 1958, p.523.

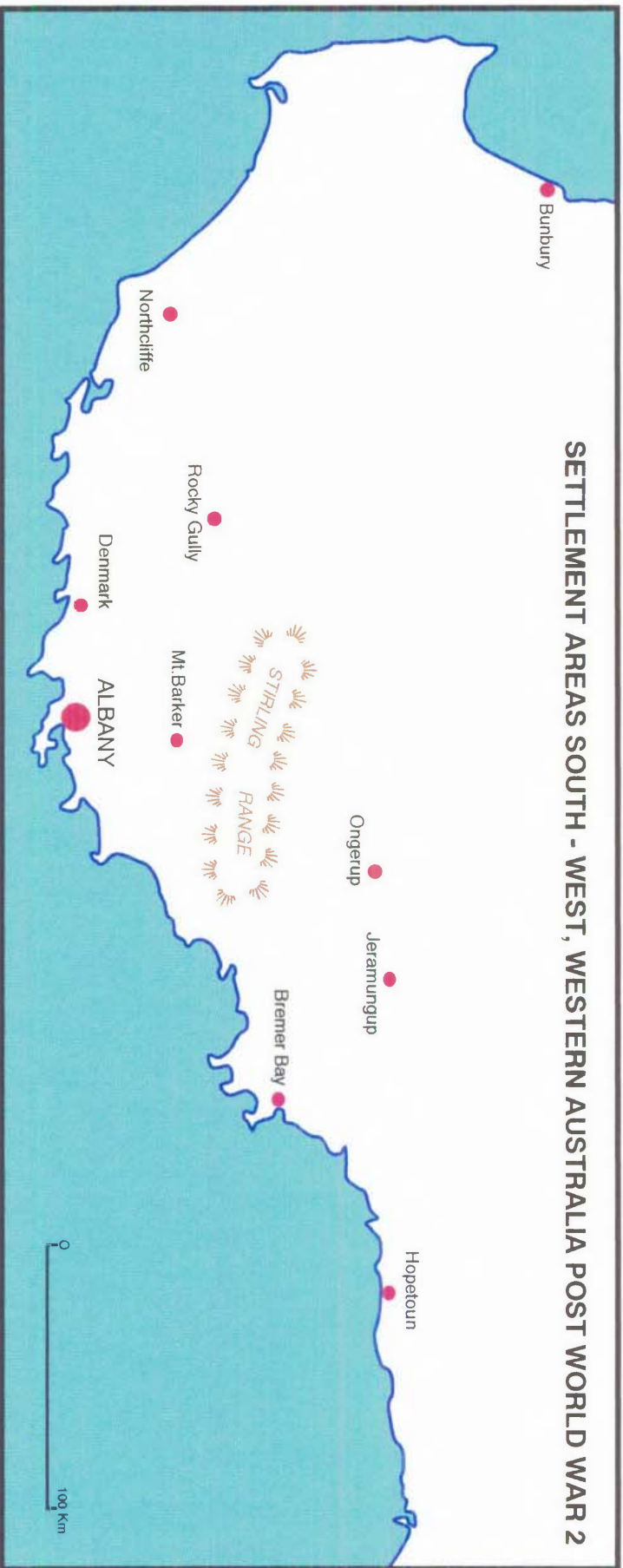
Clearly, the Principal states were forced to spend large sums of state money on the acquisition and development of existing farm land because of their belligerent insistence on state control. In comparison, the Agent states gained three-fifths of the cost of developing virgin country for the establishment of new farms.

The settlement areas of Jerramungup-Gairdner in the south-west of Western Australia provides an example of successful settlement on existing farm land and this was later extended to virgin crown land.¹⁴ On 25 January 1952 the Hassell property was transferred to the crown with the aim of developing forty farms around the homestead.¹⁵ The Board administering land settlement made an excellent choice in the appointment of Colin Cameron as their scheme supervisor.

¹⁴ This thesis does not encompass the environmental question of the mass clearing policies of the 1950s in order to achieve agricultural progress. Inevitably the mid-century attitude of land clearance described as progress would be questioned from a 1990s viewpoint.

¹⁵ R.J. Twigg, *The Impact of Europe in Settlement on the Environment of Jerramungup*, unpublished paper as part of the Australian Environmental History course, supervised by Geoffrey Bolton, Murdoch University, 1982, p.4. According to Twigg, Dept. of Lands and Surveys files concerning WSLs activities are: 5124/52 and 1076/52 at Lands Department; 7341/50, Vol.2, 3642/53, 1443/52, 3521/51, 3732/58, 514/54, Vol. 2, 1019/50, Battye Library, Perth.

SETTLEMENT AREAS SOUTH - WEST, WEST, WESTERN AUSTRALIA POST WORLD WAR 2



He was somewhat daunted by his first sighting of the Hassell property. "Nothing could have been more depressing", Cameron declared.¹⁶ The land had been cleared by fire stick and ring barking, and there was a considerable regrowth of Yate gums. The fencing was decrepit, the land eaten out by rabbits, while wedge tail eagles soared overhead looking for a meal.¹⁷ He set to work to rectify this inheritance, and his attack on the rabbit population has been described in Chapter Ten. Cameron estimated it would take up to eighteen months to clear and prepare all the land for settlement and this posed a problem. He realised that a large incentive would be required to keep men working in virtual isolation for a sustained period and decided that financial reward could provide the answer. Johnnie Walker's Chamberlain tractor worked continuously when he was promised a clearing contract of up to 30,000 acres at 10 shillings per acre if his work was up to standard.¹⁸ The procedure for clearing involved a heavy anchor chain 250 feet in length dragged between two crawler tractors. Then the land was burnt, fallowed in the summer, ploughed twice and hand cleared of sticks and mallee roots using migrant labour which Cameron found more reliable and hardworking. Finally, subterranean clover and rye grass or wheat, together with superphosphate and the necessary trace elements of copper and zinc were applied.¹⁹

So spectacular was the project's progress, a great deal of which was due to Colin Cameron's supervision, that in August 1954 the decision was made to extend the scheme by 50,000 acres initially into surrounding crown lands.²⁰

¹⁶ The Memoirs of Colin Cameron, Officer-in-Charge, Jerramungup War Service Project, 5 April 1963, p.2, State Archives of Western Australia, 3441A.

¹⁷ This property provides a good example of a farm which was under-producing and requiring the injection of funding for improvements.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.5. Cameron had great difficulty securing efficient contractors and he fired them ruthlessly if they did not make the grade.

¹⁹ Twigg, *op. cit.*, p.5.

²⁰ According to Twigg's notes: Lands and Surveys Department file No. 514/54, Vol.1, p.61.

According to Twigg, three factors contributed to the decision. From all reports the original scheme was doing well; there were still many on the qualification list and Commonwealth money could be obtained for development. Once persuaded, the Commonwealth was enthusiastic about this massive extension into virgin country. Nevertheless, belief in the new scientific methods of pasture improvement together with the visible progress of farms at Jerramungup contributed to this compromise in WSLs policy. Prior to 1954 all farms were required to contain a minimum of 600 acres of first class land, but the new subdivisions contained only second and third class land.²¹ Although proud that his achievements warranted a massive extension of the scheme, Cameron admitted that probably "the men who would eventually receive these farms were not so well off as their luckier mates" who were settled on the Hassell land.²² Undoubtedly, the State Minister was urged to make the recommendation because Federal money could be utilised for the developmental work. But there was the pressure of time, and Cameron described the crown land as "hard to deal with".²³ Still, within six years of commencement 450,000 acres had been enclosed by a vermin proof fence, 250,000 acres had been cleared and pastured and 141 farms established with eighty settlers in the Jerramungup-Gairdner area.²⁴

²¹ Cameron, *op. cit.*, p.9.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, p.11.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.19.

The Commonwealth, the Western Australian Settlement Board and Colin Cameron could be proud of what they had achieved with farm land classified as under-producing and virgin bush. Western Australia gained sixty million pounds of Commonwealth funding which "contributed greatly" to the 50 percent increase in cleared farm land and a large expansion of primary production.²⁵ Still, the large number of farms made available for war service land settlement were achieved only through the decision to reduce the quality of land allocated. Pressure was placed on the Commonwealth by the number of qualification certificates endorsed by the Western Australian Government and the lack of land in that state which could be declared as under-utilised.

Coercion was applied by the state to undertake a certain amount of experimentation because of Commonwealth funding. An example of misplaced settlement was the Manjimup-Northcliffe region of south-west Western Australia, further west than Jerramungup. Here settlement was promoted as suitable for intensive tobacco production and the blocks were divided into 100 acre farms.

²⁵ T.P. Field, *Post-War Land Settlement in Western Australia*, Lexington, 1963, p.21.

The Federal Minister subsequently admitted that tobacco growing was on a "somewhat experimental basis" following very good technical advice from the State of Western Australia.²⁶ Settlers soon experienced financial difficulties due to the size of the farms, and this was compounded when their crops were attacked by the disease "boardiness". In 1954 the Minister acknowledged a degree of responsibility, the blocks were converted to dairy farms and each debt examined on its merits with a view to being written off.²⁷ Fortunately, the Commonwealth recognised misplaced commitment following poor advice from the State and acted quickly to rectify the situation.

Rocky Gully, the first project area with pasture development in Western Australia also could be described as experimental. Initially planners battled with the notion of what constituted an economic farm of equal economic potential taking into account regional differences, variations within a project area and differing production objectives.²⁸ It suffered, according to Field, due to the fact that it was the first area from a total of 399 project farms established under WSLs in Western Australia and was exposed to an inexperienced administration, lack of materials and an inadequate budget.²⁹

It would be incorrect to give the impression that large project areas in Western Australia were a costly experiment. But it should be recognised that they presented difficulties to the Commonwealth because mostly they were restricted to the development of virgin country due to a lack of under-developed farm land like the Hassell property. Each area had to establish which type of pasture improvement was most suited, as well as trace element deficiencies.

²⁶ CPD, 12 August 1954, W. Kent Hughes, p.214.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Field, *op. cit.*, pp.21-2.

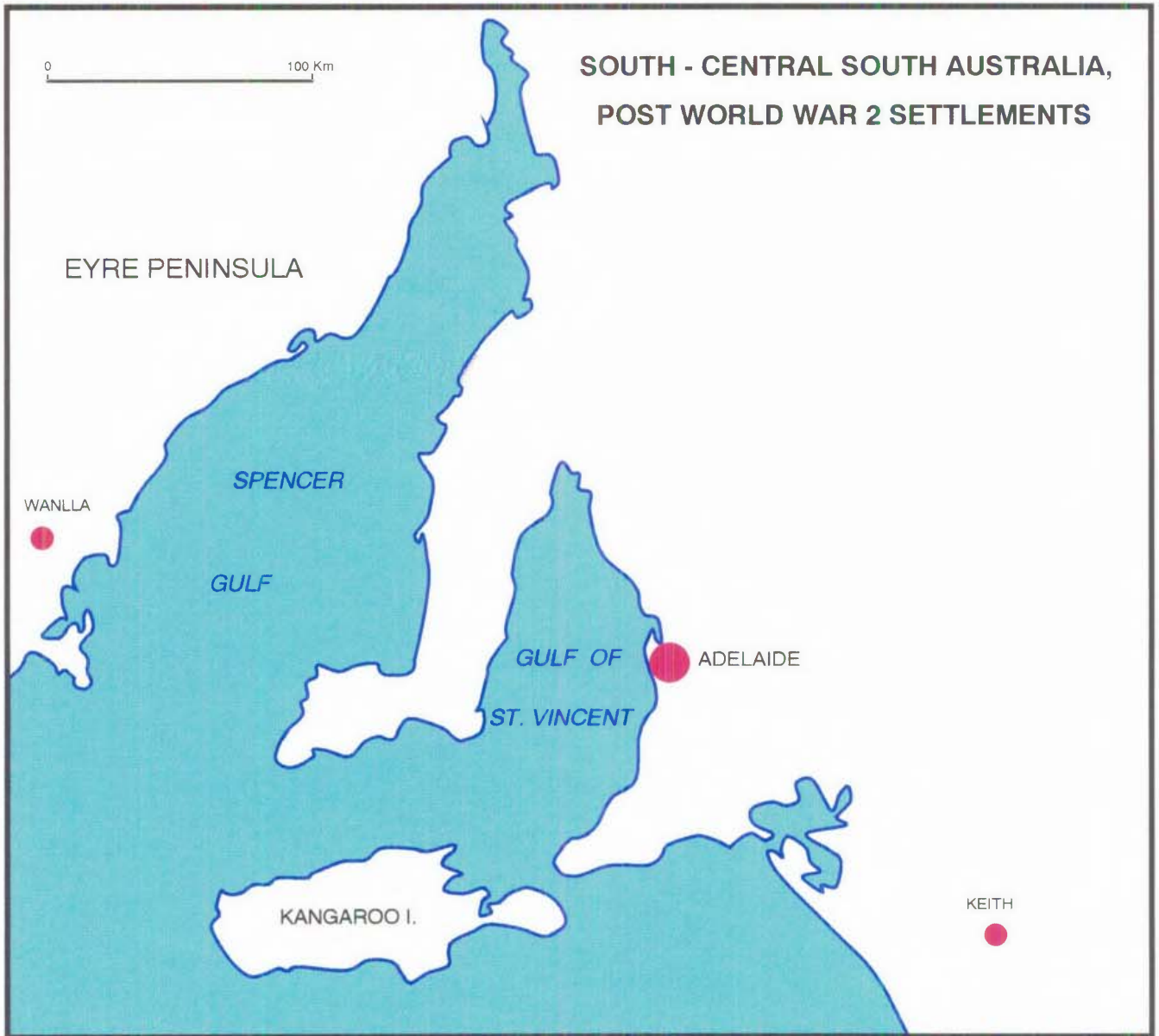
²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.23.

Having ascertained this information, development was undertaken with a strict time limit because the ex-servicemen were extremely anxious to take up their blocks. The vision and ability of men like Colin Cameron made a great difference to the outcome of the Jerramunjup settlement. But even he had to admit that the settlers on the Hassell farm land were advantaged because they were on first class land as opposed to the second and third class crown land of the later development. Pressure could have been reduced if the Commonwealth Government had accepted responsibility for selecting the men for inclusion in WSLS.

In the Agent state of South Australia after some delay, developments were undertaken on virgin country. Initially the large land owners took note of the land war in New South Wales and directed the South Australian Government that they would oppose any government action to acquire any portion of their land.³⁰ But their fears were groundless as the Federal Government was convinced that agricultural production would not increase through the sub-division of existing properties. Initially settlement commenced on virgin land near Mt Gambier and Keith in the south-east, at Wanilla on the Eyre Peninsula and on Kangaroo Island, south west of Victor Harbor.

Kangaroo Island WSLS was conceived with such hope, yet it was to become a liability for the Commonwealth and the State of South Australia for almost two decades. It demonstrated the Commonwealth's dependence on state advice when dealing with Agent states. From the turn of the century it was recognised that Kangaroo Island was under-developed. Here was an island in close proximity to Adelaide, favoured by a good average rainfall when compared with most of South Australia and free from introduced feral pests such as rabbits and foxes.

³⁰ C. Lucas, *The RSL in South Australia 1945-54*, BA Hons thesis, University of Adelaide, 1963, p.19.



In addition, the development of the island had the blessing of Rowland Hill, Dr T.H. Strong and Dr A. Callaghan, all well respected for their rural opinions Australia wide.³¹

Development of the island had been contemplated for a long period of time with the first reasonably successful experiments on the island conducted in 1907. However, the first test-block immediately prior to World War II settlement was not established until 1939 when it was stocked with 600 sheep.³² These results, and a soil survey of 125,000 acres by CSIR, supported the recommendations of Hill and Callaghan that the development was feasible. They firmly believed that any deficiencies could be rectified by the addition of trace elements. Nevertheless, the Commonwealth was cautious because of the additional costs of clearing and establishing an island settlement together with the belief that the isolated location would not attract applicants. The proposal for WSLS on Kangaroo Island was grudgingly approved by the Commonwealth however, when the attributes of good water, no pests and a proximity to Adelaide were once again considered. The extreme shortage of suitable land in South Australia eliminated a viable alternative.

According to writer and settler J. Nunn, most of the problems experienced by the settlers on Kangaroo Island were due to the poor administrative decisions of the local bureaucracy which advised the WSLS Branch of the Department of Lands.³³

³¹ Hill was the Department of Agriculture's first State Adviser in 1927 and appointed to the Land Board in 1940. Strong was Director of the Waite Institute of South Australia and Callaghan was Principal of Roseworthy Agricultural College.

³² J. Nunn, *Soldier Settlers War Service Land Settlement Kangaroo Island*, Hawthorndene, 1958, p.13.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.67.

Whereas Colin Cameron had insisted that clearing at Jerramungup should be undertaken by contract labour, on Kangaroo Island the allocated settlers did the work. Most of the men were inexperienced, and they struggled with the scrub land which private settlers before them had ignored. They lived for long periods of time in primitive work camps and were separated from wives and families at the base camp for days on end. Families were isolated from relatives, friends and facilities. They were a group of people of differing backgrounds, thrust together because of a shared dream. Many lived like this for up to four years until they were allocated their own land.

When a family finally moved on to their Kangaroo Island block, the advances for plant and stock were unrealistic. Although they were encouraged to run sheep, there was no allowance for the purchase of stock and the men were forced to take out private loans with stock firms. According to Nunn, "this anomalous situation created hardships for settlers, tension between settlers and the administration and criticism of the Department of Lands".³⁴

Due to the pressure of time, mistakes were made with the preparation and seeding of the land. Initially, the Lands Department had recommended the seeding of virgin country after ploughing without any fallowing. It was only when nearly 9,000 acres had to be recultivated in 1955 that this policy was amended.³⁵

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.29.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.32.

Another poor decision occurred in response to the above average rainfall in 1955 when the Yarloop strain of subterranean clover was shown by trials to do well in wet soils. The pastures looked vigorous, but when large areas of land were planted with this highly oestrogenic clover the result was infertility in ewes. Once again pastures had to be ploughed in and replanted

Undoubtedly, Kangaroo Island provides an extremely bleak example of state ineptitude as well as an ultimate faith in the new scientific theories of agricultural practice. Financial difficulties plagued the settlers very soon after taking up their blocks, a symptom which did not occur on dry land farms in other parts of Australia. This was exacerbated by the rents charged to settlers because of the settlement's high establishment costs. Settlers in the south-east of the state had rents of between 360 pounds and 500 pounds, whilst the Kangaroo Island settlers had to find between 750 pounds and 1,000 pounds per annum.³⁶ The local Lands Department showed little sympathy towards their plight. However, their cause was taken up by the RSL at a State Conference in 1956 which recommended that an enquiry should be held. But the Commonwealth-State investigation which followed brought little positive relief, and tended to blame individuals for their poor financial position. The situation was not resolved until the early 1970s when it was acknowledged that the level of debt on Kangaroo Island was higher than the average in South Australia. Ian Sinclair, Minister for Primary Industry, introduced the Kangaroo Island Improvement Programme with finance for scientific investigation, partial rent remission, credit for fodder conservation and most importantly, the recasting of settlers' accounts.³⁷

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.69.

³⁷ *CPD*, Ian Sinclair's Second Reading Speech on the WSLS Bill 1972, cited in Nunn, *ibid.*, p.71.

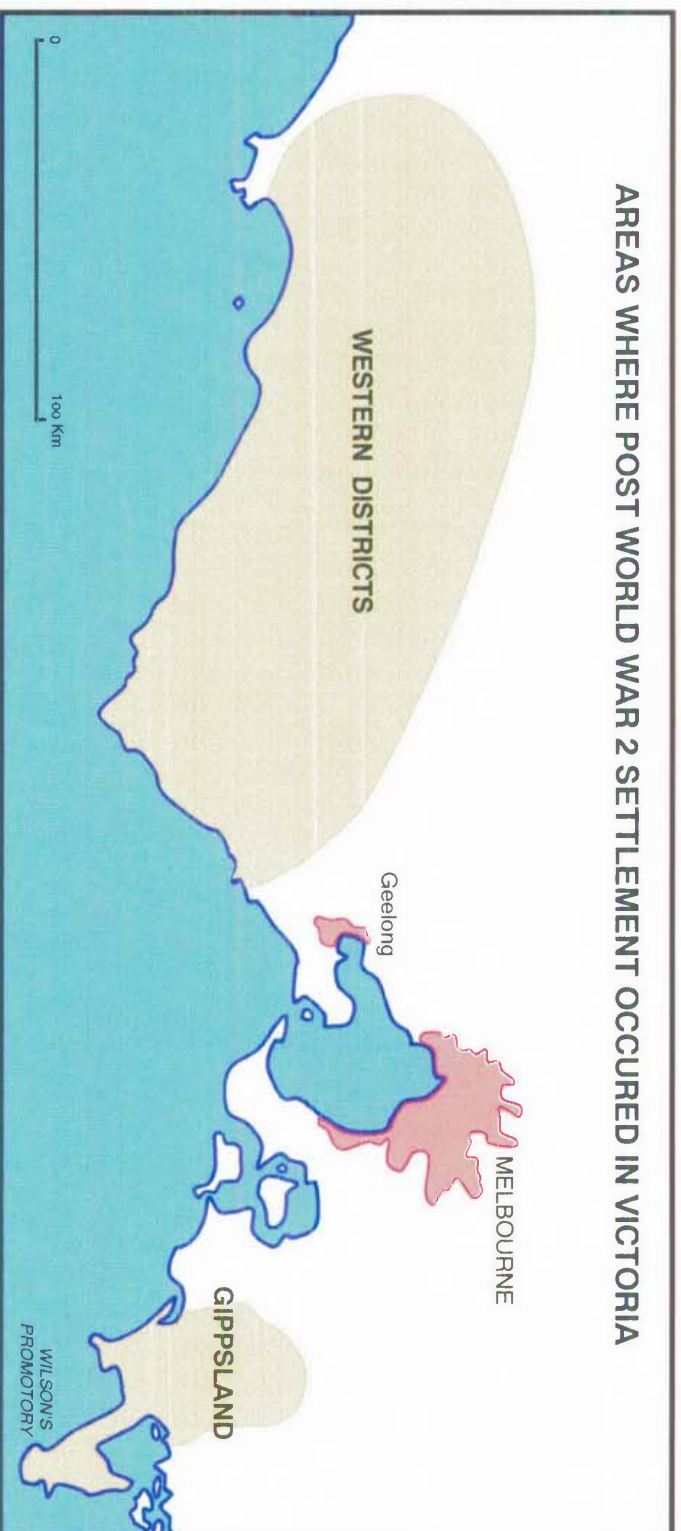
Kangaroo Island WSLs represents an extreme example of state bureaucratic ineptitude. In addition it provides evidence that ample funding and the tight control of land settlement by the Commonwealth under Agent status was not an automatic panacea for success. Undoubtedly, Agent status reduced the trauma of dual control which plagued the Principal states, but it did not eliminate the dependency of the Commonwealth on agricultural advice given by the state at a local level. Nor did it find solutions to the dichotomy of making it appear that settlers were not favoured unduly in re-establishment, while ensuring that the settler would be financially secure on his block.

Unlike the settlers on Kangaroo Island, the ex-servicemen who were placed on dry land farms in Victoria under the control of the Soldier Settlement Commission were extremely fortunate. The Federal policy of appearing to treat city and country ex-servicemen equally did not concern Les Simpson. He knew that a settler with little capital must be subsidised in order to remain viable. Victoria did this in the form of substantial write-downs on the land valuation from the outset. Due to the fact that the Federal Minister categorically refused to accept write-downs on freehold land, the Soldier Settlement Commission was forced to act outside the Settlement Agreement.³⁸ In this regard the Commission was fortunate to have the unqualified support of Premier John Cain Snr and the RSL because the Commission's refusal to back down on valuation write-downs meant that Victoria had received a mere 1 percent of the cost of soldier settlement as at February 1953.³⁹ But Victoria could mount a very strong argument that their position extremely was unfair.

³⁸ Smallwood, *op. cit.*, p.195.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.198.

AREAS WHERE POST WORLD WAR 2 SETTLEMENT OCCURED IN VICTORIA



For example, Victoria's average cost per block for the establishment of freehold land was 11,753 pounds in comparison with New South Wales which averaged 12,333 pounds per block.⁴⁰ In Western Australia the average cost per block was 21,894 pounds while the Agent state Tasmania had reached a staggering 31,343 pounds per block.⁴¹ By 1956 Les Simpson had to accept that settlers could afford to pay more for their land. Costs were steadily rising while state budgets were shrinking. Therefore, the new valuation figure of twelve pounds ten shillings per acre was introduced which retained a worthwhile subsidy as the Commission was paying an average price of thirty nine pounds per acre for land at this time.

Without doubt settlement conditions in Victoria were extremely favourable. So good was the Victorian scheme that Harold Adeney resigned from his job with the Commonwealth WSLS Division in Victoria to apply for a soldier settler block in that state. He claimed that the Victorian scheme was exceptional, providing "written down farms that were established properly, decent housing and remarkable terms and conditions".⁴²

Why was Victoria so successful? Clearly, the Soldier Settlement Commission which was outside the public service worked well. It was made up of three responsible and dynamic men, all ex-servicemen, and with a strong background in agriculture. They made a careful choice of settlement land taking the best of the Western District and Gippsland at a fraction of its true worth before price controls were lifted, and without the litigation and legal wrangles which blighted the scheme in New South Wales.⁴³ Mallee land was excluded from the scheme in order to ensure that the ex-servicemen on farms had a good chance of success.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.196.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.232.

⁴³ Victoria was not without objectors to controlled prices. However, the Commission was able to deal out compulsory acquisition threats in a more positive way which reduced most opposition.

The dismal results in that area following World War I settlement had helped establish this criterion. Unlike the ballot scheme conducted in New South Wales, the Victorian settlers were asked to apply, and were then selected on their merit under a system of points and an interview. By this method, they were able to appoint the most suitable applicant to a particular block.

There was a substantial irony in the good results achieved by Victoria. This State provided more problems for the Commonwealth than any other as the Commission was prepared to fight for policies such as land valuations, freehold status and single unit farms. Indeed, the single unit farm in Victoria proved to be exceedingly successful with no bad debts despite the warning from the RRC and the fears of the Commonwealth. An overall failure rate of only 4 percent of the 5,926 settlers placed on the land after World War II was a far better result than any other state could boast. This was due to a combination of the realistic terms and conditions, a temperate climate, good land and excellent financial returns in the growth years of the 1950s.

Victoria did have to modify its policy on land quality as suitable land became harder to obtain. In December 1953 the Land Settlement Act had extended the scheme to include civilian men over eighteen who were permitted to take up land on a perpetual leasehold basis.⁴⁴ Heytesbury near Geelong and Marlo Ewings Marsh in Gippsland, both crown land areas, provided many more problems in the 1960s than the established farms for WSLS only. The Victorian experience indicates that successful land settlement was exceedingly costly, and that crown land development was somewhat experimental in comparison with settlement on established farm land. Any comparison of Principal state settlement with the Commonwealth's virgin land developments in Agent states would give an unfair advantage to the former.

⁴⁴ This land could be freeholded after ten years. The scheme for civilians was initially administered by the Commission.

As already discussed in reference to the Rocky Gully project farms in Western Australia, a problem common to all settlement blocks, whether virgin or established farm land, was the difficulty of determining a home maintenance area. In a number of cases the declaration that blocks were roughly equal in their earning capacity was subjective. Undoubtedly, the earlier settlers were better served by farm size than those settled between 1954 and 1960 when loan allocation percentages for WSLs were reduced by the states, and administrators were keen to get impressive figures on record. The pasture improvement revolution had shown that farms could increase their stocking rate and yield per acre, and at the same time utilise less land without any loss of production. The decision to reduce the size of blocks disadvantaged agriculturists in the next decade when the cost of the new mechanisation was so great that the farm was not viable unless it consisted of a large acreage, thus permitting a lower machinery investment per acre.⁴⁵ The reduction in the size of WSL farms occurred when the median area of Australian rural holdings was increasing from approximately 200 acres at the beginning of World War I, 280 acres in 1939 and 323 acres to 1960.⁴⁶ Therefore the policy of reducing the size of settlement blocks in the latter part of the 1950s had a profound impact on their long-term viability, and was against the trend for aggregation in the farming community.

⁴⁵ A.G. Lloyd, 'The Economic Size of Farms', *Journal of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science*, No. 27, 1961, p.137.

⁴⁶ Bureau of Agricultural Economics, *Rural Industry in Australia*, Canberra, 1966, p.7.

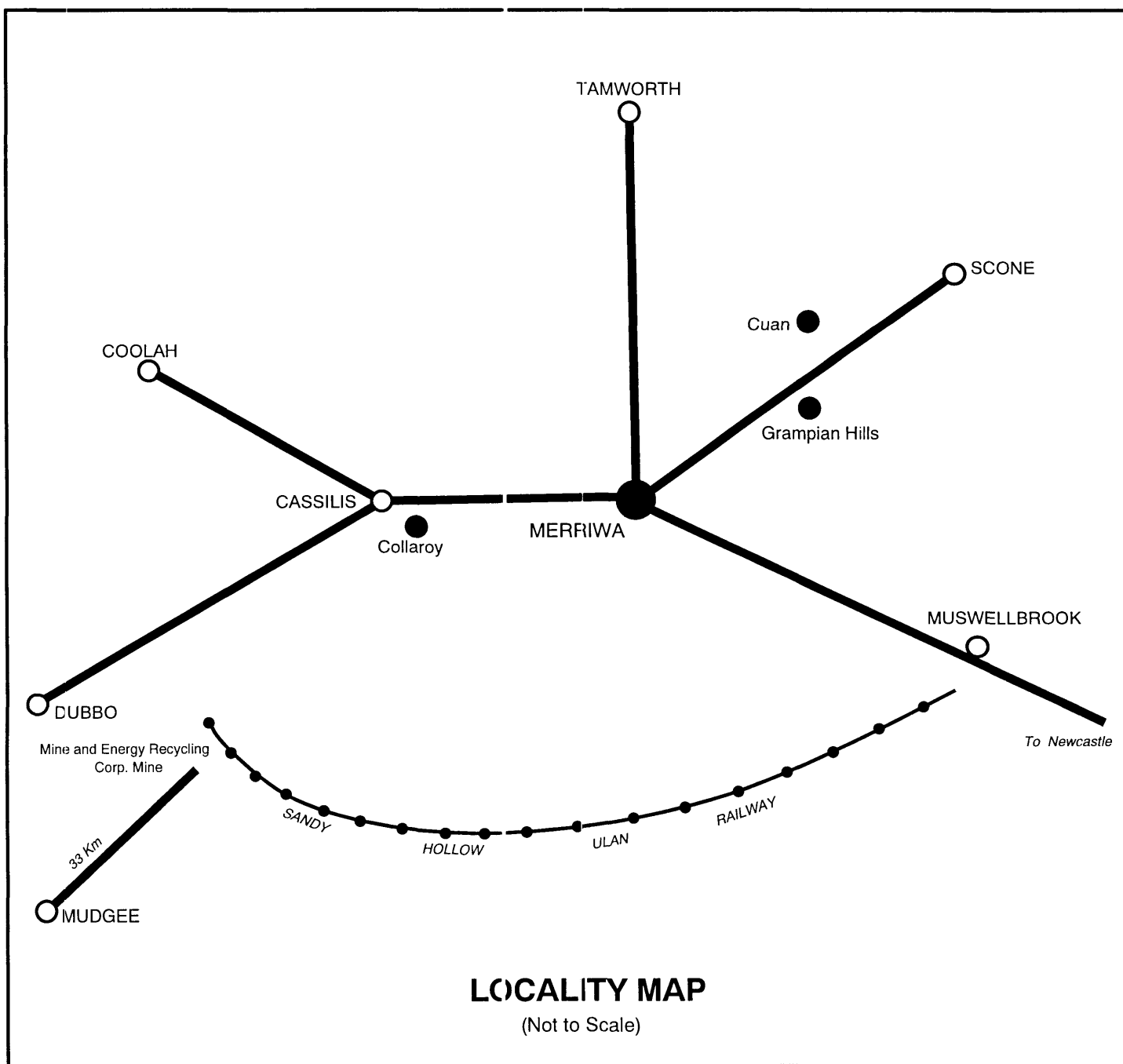
At a state level, there was pressure to squeeze more settlers into a given area of land after 1954 when the scheme was boosted by the Commonwealth's one pound for every two pounds policy. In New South Wales, pressure was exerted on Government by the massive list of qualifiers. Jim Bradley, a New South Wales Government surveyor, claims that he was requested to survey an area of the property "Benangaroo".⁴⁷ He was instructed that the subdivision should include eight farms of equal productivity when fully developed. After some consideration concerning the carrying capacity of the land, and reports from the District Agronomist and the Sheep and Wool Officer of the Department of Agriculture, he decided that the estate could support only seven farms. When he recommended to Head Office that the blocks would not meet the home maintenance size criteria, he received a phone call from the Lands Department, Sydney, and was instructed to complete the job as requested.⁴⁸ When the scheme was winding down the emphasis was on the quantity of settlers rather than ensuring successful settlement by a generous home maintenance area.

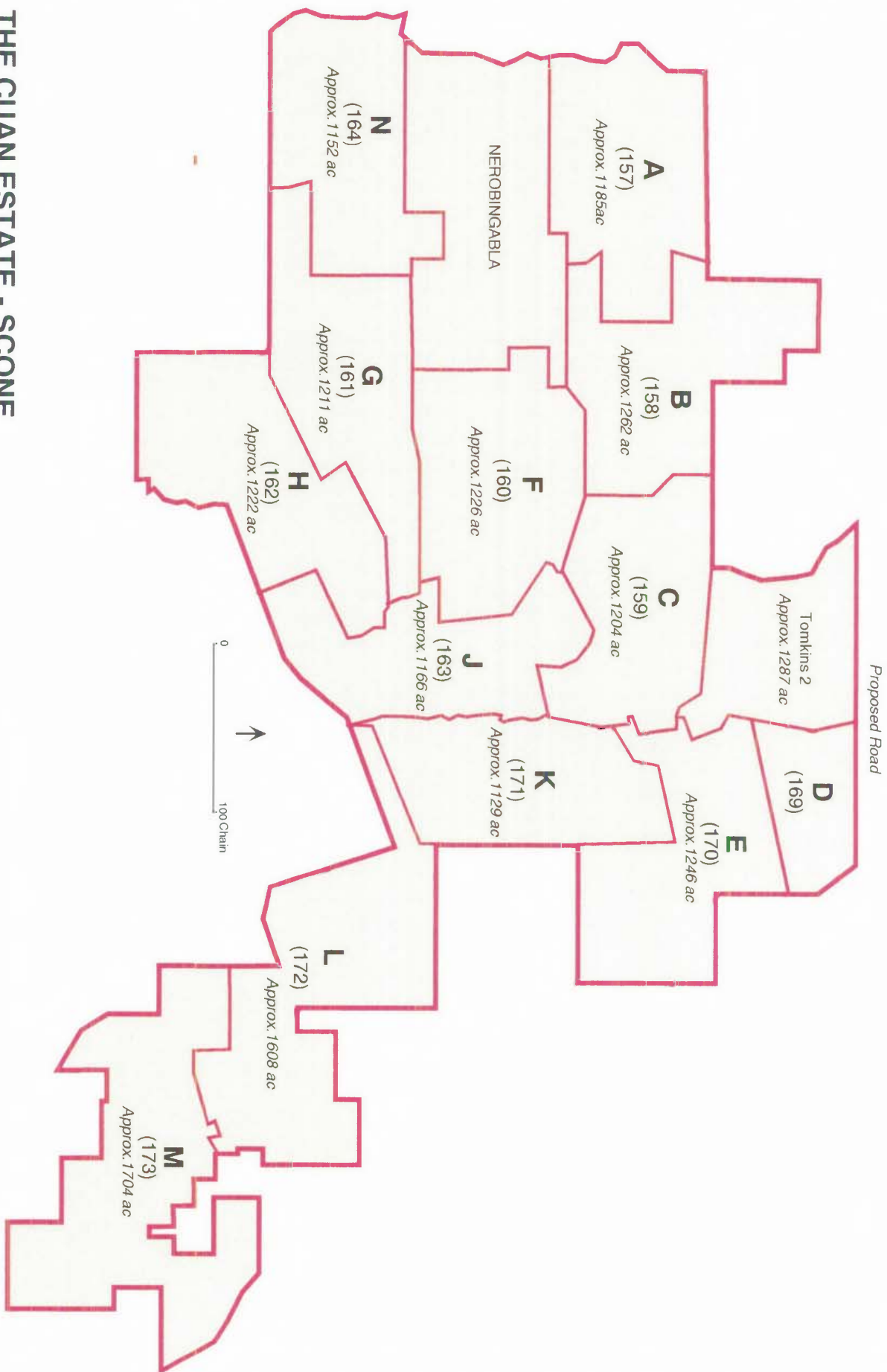
The Cuan Estate near Scone, gazetted on 6 December 1957 was one of the last ballot subdivisions in New South Wales. Ex-servicemen who were successful in the ballot took up their blocks the following year. Ali Wilson, who lived on 1,287 acres, Block D of the Cuan estate, claimed: "The Cuan Estate was a big bungle ... it was cut up too small ... they were very inadequate and wrongly classified".⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Jim Bradley joined the Department of Lands, NSW as a staff surveyor after the war. He served 1954-7 as Senior Surveyor, Cootamundra, 1957-61 as Senior Surveyor for the Goulburn Land Board District, followed by 1961-8 as District Surveyor for Armidale and Tamworth.

⁴⁸ Interview with Jim Bradley, Armidale, November 1995.

⁴⁹ Interview with Mrs Ali Wilson, settler of the Cuan WSLS estate Scone by Margaret Walsh, 1991.





THE CUAN ESTATE - SCONE

It should be emphasised that criticism of block size refers to the subdivisions in the latter years of the scheme. Initially, where state submissions were followed by careful Commonwealth scrutiny, in most cases the blocks were able to earn a living for the ex-servicemen. As already stated in Chapter Ten, those settlers who enjoyed the wool boom were more than rewarded for their hard work.

An area of compromised RRC idealism was the lack of proper amenities available to settlers when they moved on to their block after World War II. Professor Samuel Wadham, Rural Reconstruction Commissioner and Professor of Agriculture at Melbourne University, declared in the 1940s that pioneering in Australia had gone on for a very long time.⁵⁰ He believed that a modern home was a realistic expectation and an essential ingredient for a harmonious family life. Moreover, the amenities available to urban dwellers should be available to rural ex-servicemen. Yet, World War II settlers, for the most part moved into tents, sheds and garages for a period of time until their homes were erected. During this period the women felt like modern day pioneers. The delays were caused by the chronic lack of building materials and trained labour following the war. Most settlers understood the situation and agreed to go on to an unprepared block rather than lose the chance of a farm. With good humour and a sense of adventure, the women in general endured the period of time until their homes were built.

Undoubtedly, on today's standards the homes were primitive. However, in the early 1950s they were comparable with the homes funded by War Service Loans in Sydney as the homes at Allambie, on the northern beaches of Sydney, demonstrate. The post-war farm house at Muswellbrook indicates that the soldier settler home was comparable with other rural dwellings built at that time. What the homes did lack were the amenities of life such as hot water and an internal toilet.

⁵⁰ As discussed in Chapter Seven.

203 (a)

**War Service homes at Allambie on the northern beaches of Sydney
1995**

Top to bottom

This home has had a new tiled roof but retains the fibro walls. It has had an extension on the left side

This home has been clad and the roof has been tiled



203 (b)

Top to bottom

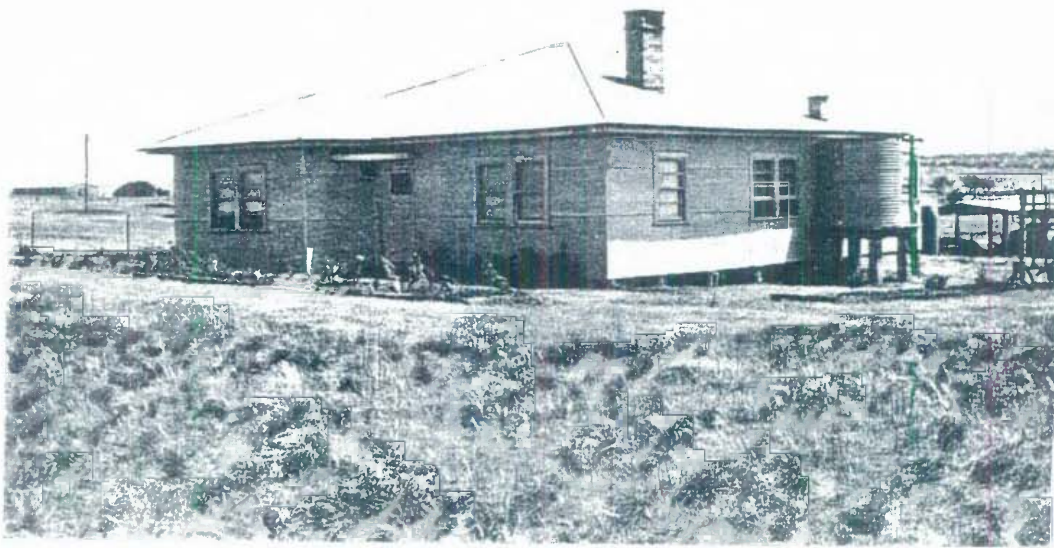
Post-war farm house which was not WSLS

This home is of similar style to the WSLS homes

War Service Land Settlement home

Annual Report, Department of Lands, 1950-51

Courtesy of Department of Land & Water Conservation



Even when incomes improved, and money could have been spent on such items, the inspectors encouraged the settlers to invest the money into their farms as many improvements were tax deductible. Nevertheless, most women were thrilled when they moved into their new homes, and were prepared to do without piped hot water or an internal toilet for a time.⁵¹

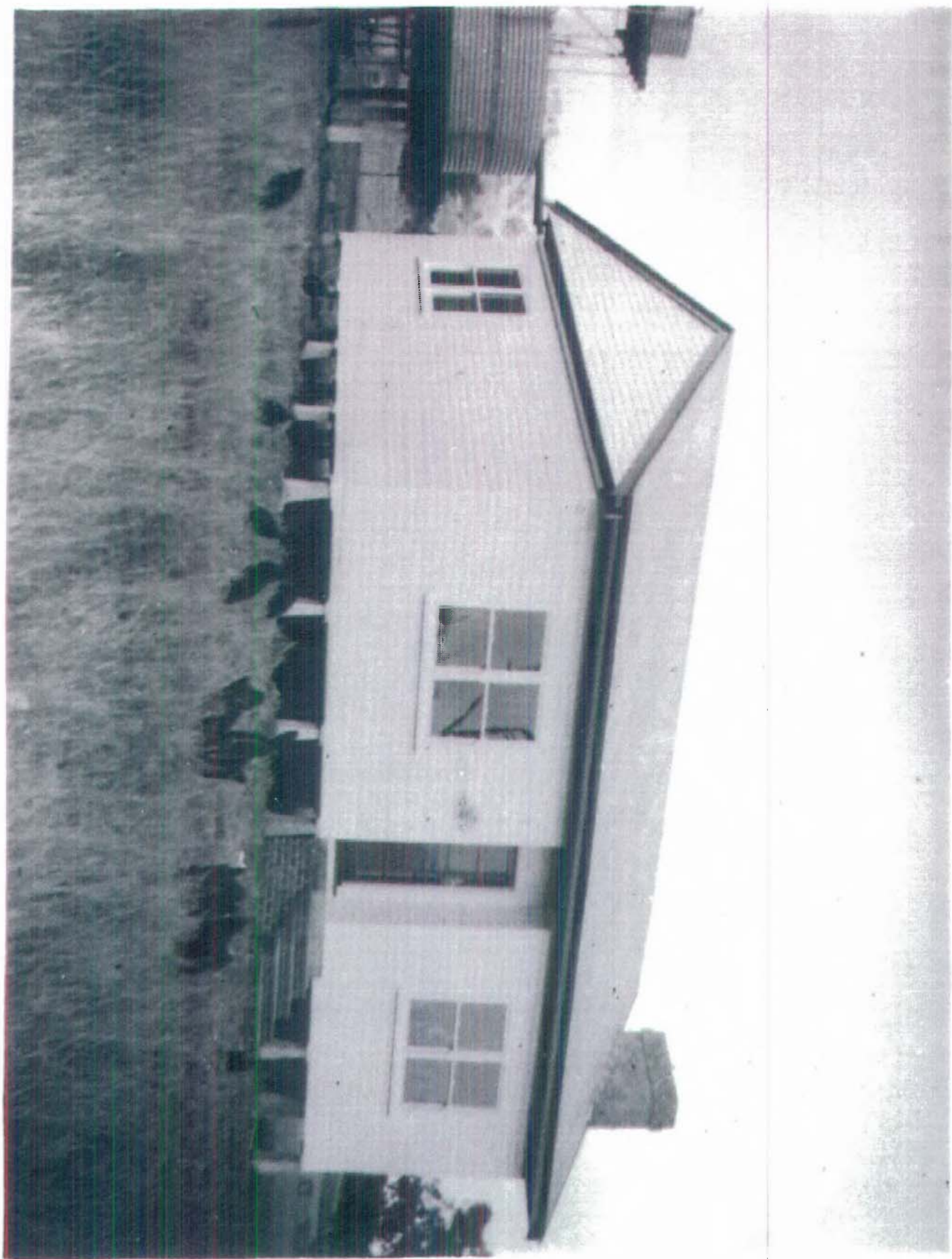
As the previous example indicates, compromises in the principles of operation were forced on to the Commonwealth and the States. Common problems encountered by Principal and Agent states alike, were the shortage of suitable land and too many qualified ex-servicemen. In Agent states, pressure was maintained by the number of qualifiers to extend into crown lands of lesser quality than originally envisaged. State advisers and planners increasingly advocated expanded settlement in order to secure Commonwealth funding for the development of their state.

⁵¹ Interview with Valma Crandell from the Cuan Estate, Block B, by Margaret Walsh, 1991.

204 (a)

Norman and Hilda Easey's new home

It was built approximately two years after their arrival on the block



If the Commonwealth had accepted responsibility for assessing qualification it could have eliminated this problem. Furthermore, the Commonwealth was dependent on the expertise of local agricultural experts who sometimes promoted experimentation at the Commonwealth's expense. Nevertheless, mistakes were rectified quickly in the case of the Manjimup tobacco settlement, and the long fight to gain justice for the Kangaroo Island settlers was an exceptional case. The Commonwealth's original concern that island settlements were costly proved correct.⁵²

Be this as it may, the problems attached to WSLS should not be allowed to overshadow the success which can be attributed to settlement. As stated in the Introduction to this thesis any measurement of 'success' or 'failure' must take into account the numbers of settlers who remained on their farms despite the fact that there can be no clear delineation between 'success' or 'failure' in respect of those who endured. Alternatively, percentage figures for those who left their land do not give a true indication of WSLS 'success' or 'failure'. Still, there is no other measure which can be applied. A comparison of the percentage failure figures for both schemes indicates a considerable reduction in the proportion of settlers leaving their war service land settlement farms in the post-World War II period.

⁵² The settlement on Flinders Island in Bass Strait also suffered from large establishment costs.

Table 11.4 indicates that Victoria experienced a better result than any other state following both wars and that Tasmanian sustained the highest percentage of failed settlers after both wars.

TABLE 11.4

PERCENTAGE OF FAILURE AMONG ORIGINAL SETTLERS

<u>State:</u>	<u>Post-1918:</u>	<u>Post-1945:</u>
	%	%
NSW	29	11 (Approx.)
VIC	17	4
Q'LD	40	10 (Approx.)
SA	33	9.8
WA	30	10 (Approx.)
TAS	61	28

Overall percentage: 29 percent Post-1918
10-11 percent Post-1945

Source: P. Dennis, J. Grey, E. Morris & Robin Prior, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, Melbourne, 1995, p.557.

In New South Wales and Victoria the settlers were given farms on the best land the states could offer. Portions of large estates, carefully acquired by owners over a period of time were carved up in the name of patriotism. Victorian Commissioner, Les Simpson, accepted that it was not possible to relate the needs of the settler to that of an urban dweller. The cost of farm establishment was large and Victorian settlers were compensated with large write-downs in valuations.

The Agent states received financial benefits which would not have been available to them without settlement. For instance, in Western Australia 60 million pounds was spent on the scheme. This contributed to a 50 percent increase in cleared land, advances in scientific knowledge and expanded production in a state which had less employment choice than the eastern states.

This chapter has concentrated on the strengths and weaknesses of the World War II scheme. An inevitable slow down occurred in settlement due to budget restraint and the scarcity of suitable land. Yet it must be emphasised that initially the scheme was subjected to detailed scrutiny and supervision. The settlers were allocated very good land under fair conditions, and the planners endeavoured to subdivide home maintenance blocks of equal earning capacity.

The Commonwealth honoured its carefully considered commitment to the states and to the ex-servicemen. The Principal states were given a second chance at increased Commonwealth funding when Federal loans were reduced. Inevitably, the offer was rejected in favour of independence. Yet, because of an overwhelming desire for success on behalf of all Australian governments, the ex-servicemen were protected, and most of the men believed that the war service land settlement scheme post-World War II offered their families an extremely worthwhile opportunity.

CHAPTER TWELVE

AN ASSESSMENT OF WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT POST-WORLD WAR II

Major differences in planning and control determined that the outcome of WSLS after World War II would be superior to the first scheme. Many harsh lessons had been made public by royal commissions and Justice Pike's Report. As a result, all Australian Governments were resolute that the shortcomings of 1918 would not be repeated. This time the lads who had fought to defend their nation must be adequately rewarded. The ex-servicemen anticipated land settlement, the RSL were determined that they should have it, and the states could not wait to implement it.

But the Commonwealth had matured. During the course of World War II the community had grown used to the fact that the Commonwealth had taken command of the whole nation. The Uniform Taxation Act of 1942 meant that the power nexus between the Commonwealth and the States was changed irreversibly in favour of the Federal body. In comparison with World War I, the parliamentarians and bureaucrats were better educated and more able to formulate realistic policy.

Stimulated by the need to eliminate economic turbulence after war, the Federal Labor Parliamentarians were filled with reformist zeal in their bid to achieve a successful outcome for WSLS.

When J.B. Chifley appointed the Rural Reconstruction Commission to recommend how the Commonwealth should implement WSLS it was not completed in isolation. Ten Reports covering all aspects of rural production and current agricultural problems were published in order to provide principles of operation for WSLS. They advocated that it should be economically sound and that the settlers should expect a return from their land equivalent to the basic wage. The scheme must be equitable and the blocks of home maintenance size. Nevertheless, there was a warning. Although the RRC recommended that lack of capital should not exclude an applicant, the Commissioners agreed that "misplaced generosity" must be eliminated.

The Commonwealth maintained realistic goals for WSLS. The scale of settlement was reduced because it was accepted that successful settlement would be costly. Minister for Post-war Reconstruction, John Dedman, was emphatic that settlement opportunities should determine the number of ex-servicemen who were placed on the land. No longer was development of the land the only path to progress. Rather WSLS was implemented because ex-servicemen and their official organisations demanded it.

Although the power base of the Commonwealth had grown visibly during World War II, the states' protection of their sovereign rights remained steadfast. This proved difficult when negotiations for a legal Agreement took place. Whereas Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland traded money for independence, the financially less well off states of Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania were anxious to act as agents of the Commonwealth in return for larger funding.

Therefore two Agreements with the Principal and Agent States made administration difficult and less efficient. Settlement commenced with essentially four schemes; the Agent states, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. Fortunately, the Commonwealth had gained agreement that they should hold the power of veto over the purchase of land and its subdivision. This reduced the tendency of New South Wales to take up the old habits of placing too many men on inadequate land. In addition, it gave the Commonwealth the control it lacked in 1918. But it was a limited control due to the determination of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland to adhere to their own ideals. Victoria took a determined stance that it would introduce freehold land and single unit farms. Victoria's Soldier Settlement Commission acted outside the public service, but with backing from the Premier and the RSL. They were independent in thought, decisive in action. Ironically, Victoria obtained the best results. This was undoubtedly due to Les Simpson's idealised stand that the ex-serviceman needed financial protection so he instigated a sizeable write down of capital valuations.

New South Wales, in contrast, endeavoured to implement the scheme as laid down by the Commonwealth Agreement but suffered endless litigation because of their defiant stand that the rights of the ex-servicemen must be protected at all costs. When other states recognised that 1942 land valuations were not equitable in 1949, New South Wales stood firm with legislation giving an extra 15 percent only to those who volunteered their land. The situation in New South Wales resembled war: war between the Government and the large land owners who believed that they were expected to make a contribution, far greater than other sections of the community.

Not only did New South Wales Minister for Lands, W. Sheahan, antagonise the large land holders, but he had an on-going fight with Dedman, the Federal Minister for Post-war Reconstruction. The Minister for Lands resented Commonwealth intervention in matters, he believed, the state should decide.

While the Principal states struggled to maintain a relationship with the Commonwealth in the early years of settlement, the Agent states were undergoing development. Large areas of virgin land were cleared and pasture improved in South Australia. In Western Australia, farms were established on developed land bought from land holders as well as crown virgin country. With few alternatives, the Agent states derived financial benefits from WSLs.

Despite the problems of co-operation and efficiency between State and Commonwealth Governments, the early settlers placed on the land generally did well. Many farms were recommended to stock sheep and as a consequence they reaped the rewards of the wool bonanza of 1950-51. WSLs ex-servicemen were extremely lucky in comparison with their World War I counterparts because they entered agriculture at a time of exceptional economic activity and buoyant prices. They were settled at the right time to benefit from the research of universities, institutes, colleges, Departments of Agriculture and the CSIRO into plant and animal diseases, pasture improvement, trace elements and myxomatosis. Technological developments brought mechanical equipment which was of great benefit to farmers.

While attitudes of co-operation and mutual trust between the Commonwealth and the Principal States were disappointing, the experience of settlers was the reverse. Mostly, the ex-servicemen were divorced from the struggles of principle between Governments by the day to day hard work of running a farm. Nevertheless, taking into consideration that the Commonwealth was forced into a situation of dual control, the scheme could be deemed successful. The Commonwealth had greater control by its legal Agreement with Principal and Agent States and a power of veto. The settlers had low interest and fair terms. Most of all, they were blessed with a decade of relative prosperity which contributed greatly to their improved condition.

CONCLUSION

Soldier settlement was an inevitable consequence of World War I, in spite of the fact that many closer settlers had been struggling to remain on their farms before the war. Australian ex-servicemen were keen to accept Prime Minister Hughes' offer of land settlement because of the mystique surrounding agriculture and the independence which farm ownership bestowed. Following the Commonwealth's pledge that the Federal Government would take responsibility for the rehabilitation and re-establishment of the men, parliamentarians searched for a suitable employment scheme. Soldier settlement appeared to provide the answers to problems faced by governments. For instance, it would re-locate the ex-servicemen to the countryside and would remove the perceived threat of civil disobedience from cities. Moreover, it would promote a noble and worthy yeomanry. Yeomen were regarded as ideal citizens for a developing nation because the men would gain middle class status through land ownership.

Britain anticipated that Australia would undertake land settlement in the same manner as in the dominions of Canada, South Africa and New Zealand. Furthermore, as Australia's empty lands were vast and waiting for agricultural development, land settlement was considered the most suitable method of employment for the large numbers of men on their return from the war. The Australian economy was tied to British loan funding and, to enable loan monies to be maintained, it was essential that Commonwealth and state governments should agree with British expectations that an Australian land settlement scheme should incorporate British ex-servicemen. Central to this notion of land development was the expectation that future progress for the British Empire was linked with economic co-operation. Australia would provide the raw product and import the value-added goods manufactured by Britain.

What both parties failed to foresee was that this scenario could not be sustained. Europe, as well as all settler countries, increased their production of food post-World War I, and the prosperity which the Commonwealth believed would result from a boost in the farming sector did not eventuate. The export income was not generated to service the borrowings from Britain.

Soldier settlers in Australia suffered financial stress from the outset, and as early as 1919 the Commonwealth recognised that its role would be confined to the management of debt. This was even before the collapse of commodity prices in the 1920s and indicated that the scheme itself was flawed.. Plans for the Pike Inquiry into losses associated with soldier settlement commenced in 1927, which shows that the settlers were failing to earn a living from their farms well before the Great Depression. The economic problems of the 1920s and 1930s added to existing financial difficulties already experienced by the men.

Soldier settlement post-World War I failed to meet the high expectations of 1916. Although 31 percent of ex-servicemen did remain on their farms after World War I, most were supported by extensions to their debt repayments, the allocation of more land to bring the farm up to a home maintenance area and debt write-offs. In the 1920s to quit your land was to admit 'failure'. Consequently, many settlers were prepared to accept poor living conditions in comparison with their city counterparts in order to keep their way of life and maintain the *status quo*. This indicates that the 29 percent of settlers who did leave their farms did so because of a despair so great, that they could not conceive any rational way of repaying their debts.

The World War I scheme proved disappointing to the Commonwealth. Not only did it consistently fail to meet budget allocations but the losses continued to mount. The royal commissions, inquiries and select committees struggled to recommend solutions to the dilemma. The community too, was bitter. They felt that the ex-servicemen had been cheated of a just reward for serving their country well.

War Service Land Settlement following World War II was advantaged by many factors in comparison with its predecessor. These ex-servicemen were blessed with almost two decades of exceptional economic growth and expansion, while those placed on blocks early in the scheme participated in the golden years of wool production, the wheat boom of the 1960s and a general buoyancy in farm commodity prices. In contrast with the uncontrolled and depressed export markets faced by the settlers of the 1920s and 1930s, the World War II settlers were certainly placed in a superior economic position. The overall failure rate was reduced to 10-11 percent approximately, and this would have been less without Tasmania's high failure rate of 28 percent.¹

In line with the rest of the world, Australia was poised on the brink of expansion in 1945. The community was prepared to examine new options and this idealism spilled over into land settlement. Deeply embarrassed by the failure of the 1918 scheme, both Commonwealth and state governments were determined that this time, they would reach a successful outcome. The World War I scheme was tainted by the memories of inquiries and royal commissions endeavouring to patch up a scheme in tatters. By 1943 the level of debt for the scheme had reached 45,000,000 pounds.

¹ P. Dennis, J. Grey, E. Morris & R. Prior, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, Melbourne, 1995, p.557.

Nevertheless, despite some on-going frustration concerning a system of dual control between the Commonwealth and state governments in the late 1940s, these governments were united in their objective that a poor outcome must not happen again.

A major reason for the earlier scheme's demise was the failure of the Commonwealth to make an agreement with the states concerning Federal control. Settlement after World War I gave unofficial sanction for the states to undergo settlement without reference to the Commonwealth. Ideally, it would have been preferable for the Commonwealth to take overall control of the scheme. However, this was never a viable option because the Australian Constitution designated land as a state responsibility. In addition the Commonwealth had no experience in land matters. Therefore, the World War II scheme endeavoured to work within the confines of the Constitution, uphold the sovereignty of the states, yet place the overall financial control and settlement veto with the Commonwealth. In general, it worked well, given the complexity of two schemes to accommodate the Principal and Agent states. In the case of the Principal state of Victoria which embarked on settlement outside the Agreement to a large extent, there was an extra incentive to be generous to its settlers because they desperately wanted to claim success. Retention rates on farms for the states differed.

Victoria was the most successful with a 4 percent failure rate, with New South Wales 11 percent approximately, Queensland and Western Australia 10 percent approximately and South Australia 9.8 percent.² Although the Agent states show a similar result in percentage terms to New South Wales, it must be remembered that soldier settlement in those states was almost always confined to virgin country due to an acute shortage of suitable land. In comparison, many of the settlers under Principal state management were settled on a portion of the best pastoral land their state could offer.

Undoubtedly, all tiers of government had learned lessons from the past scheme. The Commonwealth had formed the view that any scheme would be a large cost to the community. In public it was claimed that war service land settlement would be implemented because of the need for increased primary production in Australia. However, privately it was a very different story as indicated in Chapter Eight where it was shown that settlement was undertaken by the Labor Government following World War II because it was an expectation of the electorate. This perspective was very different from the scenario of 1918 when leaders believed that Australia's future rested totally with primary production.

A concept which had disadvantaged the World War I settler was the notion that all land could be made productive through the hard physical work of the settler. As time went by and scientific soil testing was introduced it was found that this was not the case and that Australian soils suffered from serious deficiencies. The problems attached to the Kangaroo Island settlement were exceptional, and should be contrasted with the good results for settlement obtained in Victoria overall. For the most part, the blocks lived up to the moderate claims of the Commonwealth. The ex-servicemen were promised a block which would earn a living based on the basic wage of a worker.

² *Ibid.*

It was not intended that the land should lead to the aggregation of a large holding, but was aimed at providing a living for the nominated person and his family.

Due to problems experienced in agriculture between the wars, Chifley appointed the Rural Reconstruction Commission officials to make recommendations for the settlement of ex-servicemen on the land, and on primary production in general. The four men who examined evidence of past failure in order to put forth a blueprint for success must be acknowledged. In addition hardworking men like Chifley, Coombs, Dedman in the Federal arena and Les Simpson of the Victorian Commission all made important contributions to the improved circumstances of the settlers.

The scheme which was based on the work of the RRC derived benefits from price control. It is questionable, however, whether it should have been imposed for so long when the open market became inflationary. Many of the negative aspects of the scheme occurred at a state level because they had the difficult task of choosing the land, the men and getting them started. For instance, the New South Wales community was outraged by what they saw as an anomaly in the ballot method of land disposal when Falkiner drew a block. Nevertheless once a settler was placed, he was basically immune from the problems of Government.

Overall the scheme was tightened and improved in comparison with that of World War I. This time the Australian economy was sufficiently strong for the scheme to be financed without the need to borrow from Britain. 37,561 men were allotted farms post-World War I, but this was reduced to a total of 12,036 post-1945 even though over three times as many served in the armed forces in the second world war.³

³ *Ibid.*

The Commonwealth had to approve every acquisition of land by the states which had to meet strict guidelines. Perpetual leasehold tenure reduced the capital valuation in all states except Victoria where subsidised valuations were upheld. The egalitarian nature of the scheme was preserved.

A more 'successful' outcome was enjoyed by World War II ex-servicemen because of careful planning, a more equitable scheme and improved commodity prices. Their land was not a gift, but in general they had gained benefits from a fair scheme with moderate valuations and interest rate payments over an extended period. The Commonwealth had honoured its limited commitment of an income comparable with the basic wage. Unlike settlers from the previous war, their land had become valuable in the period of twenty years, and this provided some compensation for their hard work.