



Werribee Irrigation District

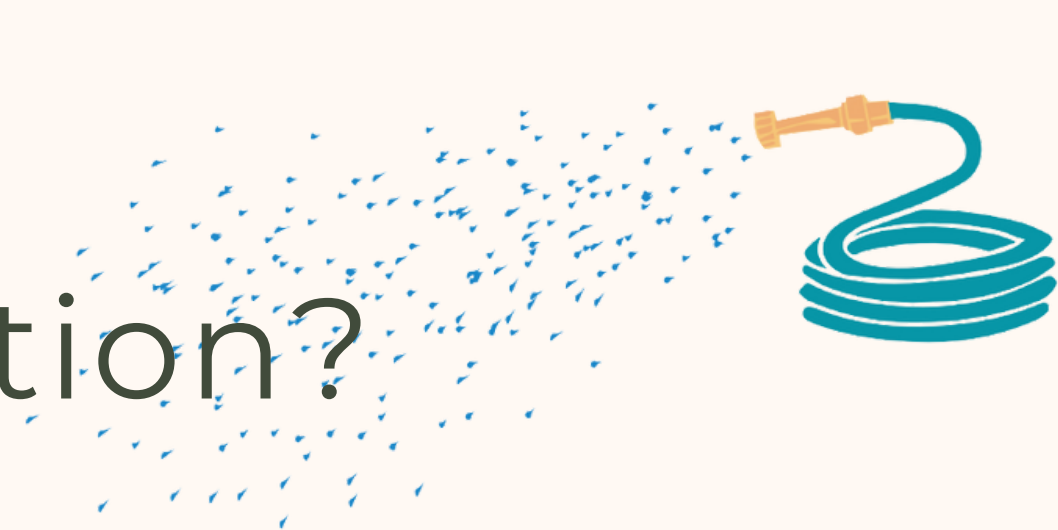
From the creek, to the crop and onto your plate.

Let's learn about our local irrigation system, and why it is so important to our everyday lives.





What is irrigation?



Irrigation is the 'controlled' way of feeding crops, plants, fruits, and vegetables.

Unlike rain, which can be unpredictable, irrigation allows us to control when and how much water is available. Irrigation is so important in Australia because we rely on it for so much food and fibre production.

Rice, cotton, fruit and nuts use the most irrigation water. Other major water users are; sugar cane, grapevines, vegetables, as well as pastures and cereals for grazing animals.

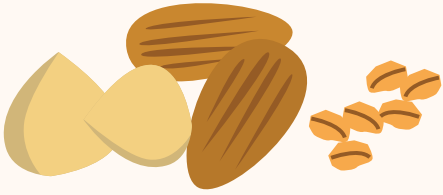
Australian farmers use 5.7 million megalitres of water per year to water their crops and pastures, with 1.5 million hectares of agricultural land under irrigation (ABS, 2021).



Rice



Cotton



Nuts



Fruit





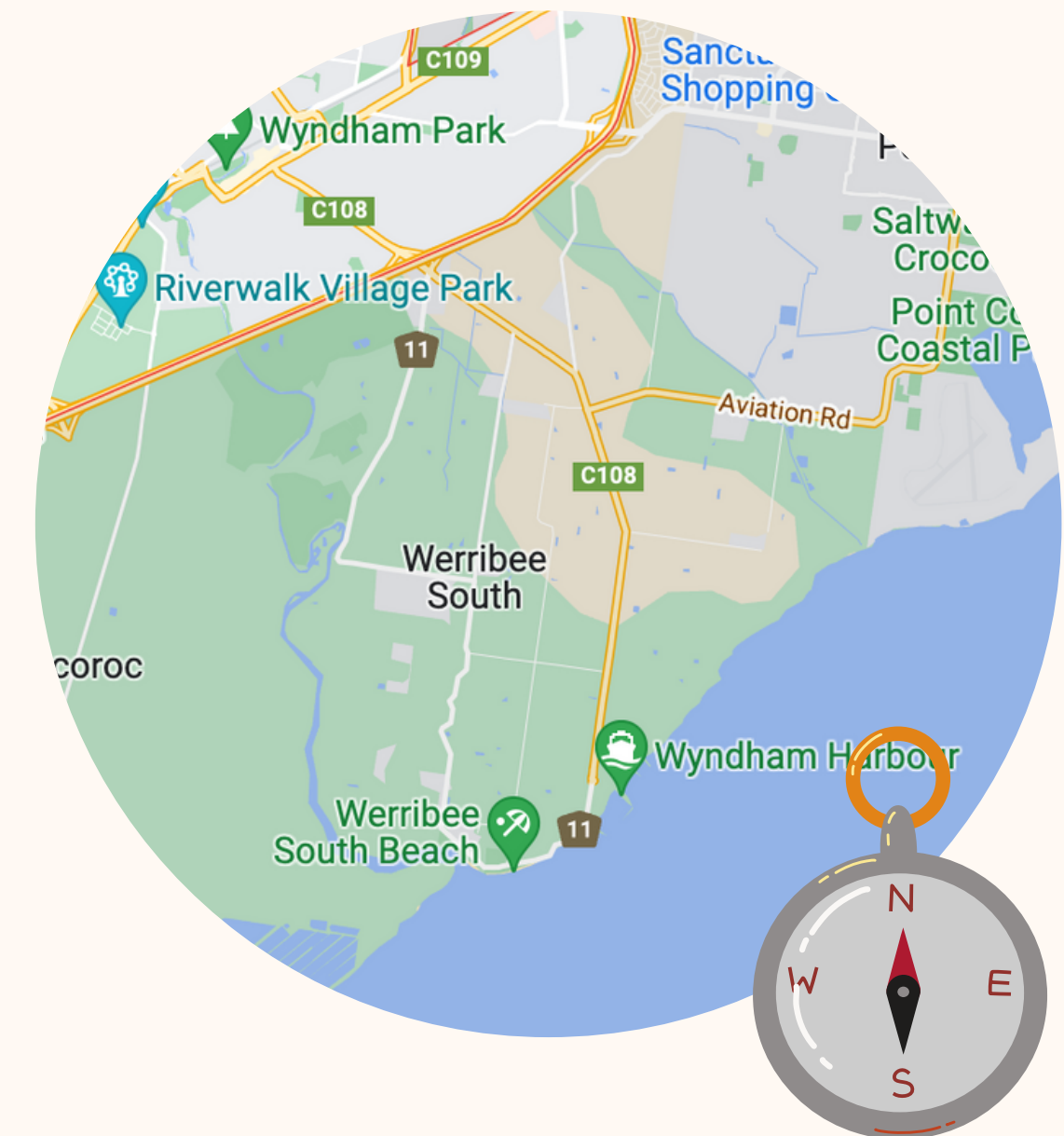
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Water is crucial for all of us to live. As we know, when it rains, water droplets fall high from the sky and onto the earth. Some droplets may land in creeks, some may land in the ocean, and some may land on your head. But it's harder than you think to catch the water ourselves.

This is where **Southern Rural Water** comes into play; they supply the systems that are responsible for capturing, storing and providing irrigation water to the Werribee region.

The Werribee Irrigation District is one of Melbourne's vegetable growing areas, located on Melbourne's doorstep in the estuarine flood plain of the Werribee River. Irrigation is important in the Werribee district as it plays a vital role in the production of many vegetables across not only Victoria, but the entire country and beyond.

So let's go ahead and learn a bit about the history of irrigation in Werribee.





The history of Werribee Irrigation District

Werribee is located 32km south-west of Melbourne's CBD. The name Werribee is said to come from a local Wathaurong (Wadda-Warrung) Aboriginal word, meaning 'the spine' or 'backbone', which described the beautiful curve of the river.

The Werribee region was settled immediately after the first arrivals of European settlers in the 1920s, and has been an important agricultural centre ever since.

There are over 3,100 hectares of market gardens in Werribee South - the soils in this area are great for growing numerous vegetables which we consume all across Australia.

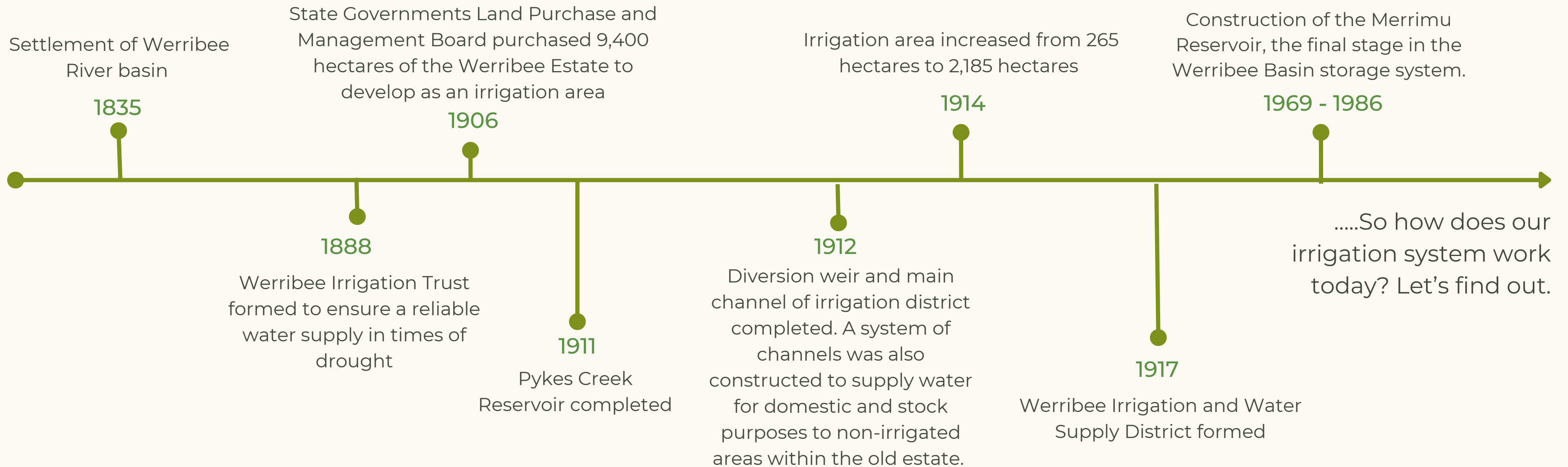
In the 1920's a lot of the land was turned into farming for irrigation purposes. The area has a lot of Italian history too, with a tight knit community and family relationships.

In fact, the original 12 farms from the 1920's still have connections with the same families, having been divided up and passed down from generation to generation.





The history of Werribee Irrigation District





How water is supplied today



The Werribee Irrigation District receives its irrigation supply from three storages;

- Pykes Creek (which has a capacity of 22,119 megalitres)
- Merrimu Reservoir (which has a capacity of 14,340 megalitres) and;
- Melton Reservoir (which has a capacity of 32,215 megalitres)

The Werribee Irrigation District uses gravity to transfer water to the community. This means that the system relies on there being enough water in reservoirs and creeks upstream to travel down (with the help of gravity) through pipes and channels to customers.

The Werribee district uses a combination of pipelines and open channels to transfer water, however a lot of the district remains an open channel.

Customers order water through **Southern Rural Water's** Waterline ordering system and it is then delivered through numerous checks, regulators, and valves. This brings the water to what we call a "farm gate", where it is measured by either a dethridge wheel on open channels or a flow meter on pipelines. Finally, it is then directed by customers into storage dams or into on-farm irrigation systems.



Melton
Reservoir

Did you know?

Southern Rural Water also supplies high quality treated water to some customers in the area from Melbourne Water's Western Treatment Plant.



What is produced in Werribee?

There are hundreds of farmers in the Werribee Irrigation District. Broccoli, lettuce, cauliflower, and cabbage are some of the more common vegetables grown in the area that are either consumed locally, or exported to other places.

(Milestones in water reuse, 2013)



Broccoli



Lettuce



Cauliflower



Cabbage

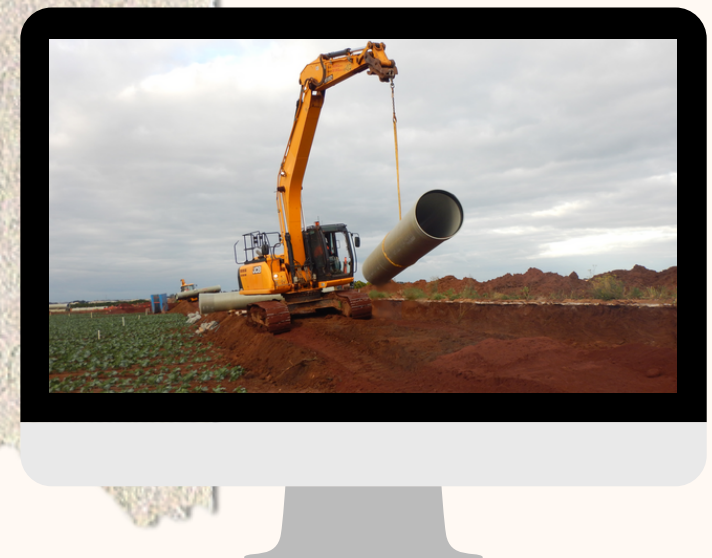


Project spotlight: Modernisation Project

The Werribee Irrigation District Modernisation project involves piping all of the Werribee Irrigation District channels with new, efficient pipelines and upgraded customer outlets.

Once completed, the project will generate approximately 5,600ML of water savings to support irrigators and production in drier times, improve reliability and benefit the natural ecosystem of the Werribee River.

Over the next two years, Southern Rural Water will complete the remaining pipelines and commence upgrades of the Main Channel from the Werribee River. This will improve the overall operation of the district, while also reducing the risk of channels overflowing once the system is fully piped.

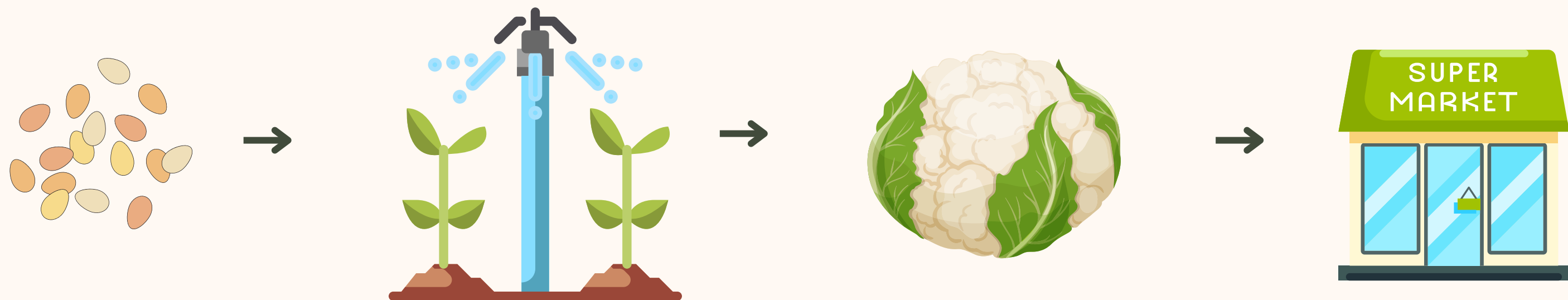




Water for community health and nutrition

The food that ends up on our plate has quite a journey when you really think about it.

- A cauliflower is planted and grown from a tiny seed...
- irrigation then allows us to properly water the cauliflower so it has the best potential to grow big, healthy, and flavoursome
- it is then picked by farmers when it's ripe and;
- delivered to supermarkets where it can be purchased for us to eat!





Water for community health and nutrition

Fresh fruits and vegetables eaten every day are so beneficial for our health -with all of the essential vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre to help us live long, healthy lives - not to mention the superhero-like strength we get from eating all of our greens. Southern Rural Water helps our communities have access to reliable water every day, helping our regions to thrive.

