



DISCOVER WALKA
IT'S CHANGING HISTORY

FACT SHEET

THE WALKA WATER WORKS IS THE ONLY WATER WORKS IN THE HUNTER VALLEY AND THE LARGEST REMAINING WATER WORKS IN AUSTRALIA. IT IS A PLACE OF NATIONAL ENGINEERING SIGNIFICANCE WHICH PUTS IT ALONGSIDE ICONS LIKE THE SYDNEY HARBOUR BRIDGE!

WHY WALKA WATER WORKS?

The need to build the water works resulted from increases in the population of Newcastle and Maitland during the late 1800's, and concern for the standard of health. At the time, in 1876, Newcastle had a population of 20 000, its shipping trade was larger than Sydney but it only had two public wells!

This meant that people would not have been able to wash and bath too often. Today, we can easily turn on a tap, but then, there were serious health risks, and even death for people with no easy access to water. A safer way of obtaining water was needed.

THE VISIONARY DESIGNER

To design and plan the Water Works, a talented Hydraulic Engineer, William Clark was brought out from England. He made detailed surveys of the Hunter area to choose the ideal location for the Water Works. Walka, was chosen because:

- It was located close to the Hunter River
- It was outside the tidal influence of the Hunter River
- The Walka lagoon which was located there formed a good natural storage reservoir
- The hillside location meant that tanks and filters were out of flood reach

Once the design was completed by Clark, the government allocated funds for its construction.

INSIDE AND UNDER THE GROUND

All the machinery and pipes for the Water Works had to be ordered from England. In 1882, the first order of cast iron pipes left England in the barque 'Bolivia'. Between 1882 and 1885 the tunnels, pipes, dam wall, tanks and filter beds were contracted, and by 1886 the pump house with all its machinery was completed.

On 6th January 1887, the pumping engines were tested, and a week later, water reached Newcastle and Maitland for the first time! East Maitland and Morpeth residents had to wait until 1888 to be connected to the new water supply.

BIGGER AND BIGGER

The population of the region continued to grow. Even though the pumping station had been designed for a population of 50 000, by 1897 additional pipelines were needed by the growing mining settlements, and were installed, along with more machinery in 1897, 1913 and 1919.

However by this time, the district Water Board who were in charge of the Water Works, realised another larger water supply was needed. Chichester Dam was opened in 1924, and Walka pumpstation was closed down between 1931 and 1945, only to be used in emergency.

DYNAMITE!

In 1945, all the machinery was removed from the pumphouse. The pumping engines were so strong, dynamite was needed to dislodge them! The Electricity Commission then built a power station on the site in 1951 and it stayed in use until 1976.

NEW ERA

A new era for Walka as a place for public use and recreation began in 1984. Visitors continue to use Walka for walking running, picnicking and special occasions. The place also plays an important role in the ecology of the region as a natural refuge for wildlife.