

Electrical Power in Mandurah



Electricity first came to Perth in 1893; electric powered trams were already in use just prior to the turn of the century. Kalgoorlie, so distant to Perth had electricity by 1910, possibly due to the gold boom.

Pinjarra resourced their own Electric Light Board, on Anzac Day 1927. Power was managed by the Pinjarra Electric Light Board with two councillors on this Board.

Pinjarra hospital was connected in 1929.

The Electric Light Board was sold to a private operator in 1930. The operator made improvements to the supply and some labour-saving devices such as vacuum cleaners and irons were able to be used by the housewives of the day.

In 1936 the Pinjarra electric light supply was upgraded.



Electrical Power in Mandurah cont'd

In 1932^[2] the Murray Roads Board granted a concession to the Mandurah Electric Light and Power Co. to establish a plant in Mandurah. Owners of the concession were William White and Patrick (Bill) FitzGerald. The supply of electricity commenced in 1933 and was from direct current (DC). They had 5 consumers at commencement.

^[3]In 1934 the partnership of the two men dissolved and Bill FitzGerald became the sole owner. Bill married his wife Patricia in January 1935 and brought her to Mandurah to live.

By 1938 electricity was supplied to the Peninsula Hotel and moves were being made to connect up a few houses in Halls Head.

In 1939, a 24 hour service was provided for the town.

Halls Head residents had to wait; the dilapidated state of the Mandurah Bridge caused the authorities to think twice about taking electric light wires over it.

^[4]The State Electricity Commission (SEC) was formed in 1945 following the sharp increase of customers' electricity demands after World War II. Its mission was to create a high-voltage transmission grid with the ability to carry power over long distances.

^[5]By 1951 the twenty years concession granted to Mandurah Electric Light and Power Company was coming to an end and Bill & Pat FitzGerald negotiated with the State Electricity Commission to purchase equipment that would be useful. At this time there were approximately 300 customers being supplied with both light and power, the cost of power (5 pence per unit) was less than that of light (10 pence).

With the advent of the State Electricity Commission in Mandurah the power supply was transferred to an Alternating Current (AC) and this meant most houses within Mandurah required an upgrade of wiring to comply with the changes.

By 1957, the power stations in East Perth, South Fremantle, Collie and Bunbury were linked to form the interconnected electricity grid through the southern region of the state.

Reference. R Richards. *Mandurah and Murray*. State Electricity Commission website. Copies of Dissolution, Documents of sale, scanned copies held at museum.

^[2] From Murray & Mandurah: Author – Ron Richards, Pat's own records state 1932)

^[3] Copy of Stat. Dec. of Dissolution held in the Museum's collection.

^[4] From Energy Networks Association – History of Electricity

^[5] Documents of sale, copies in the Museum's collection.

