



The big idea that was almost a disaster

The Great Lake Power Scheme was the brainchild of Central Highlands sheep farmer, Harold Bisdee, and his brother-in-law, Alexander McAulay, a university physics professor.

Together with metallurgist, James Gillies, they battled to establish it as a private enterprise, until impending war in Europe cut off new capital.

The Tasmanian Government took over the scheme in 1914, forming the Hydro-Electric Department — Australia's first public, statewide energy generating enterprise.

The visionary scheme came close to disaster many times, with formidable snowstorms, industrial unrest, impossibly heavy construction gear, specialist equipment delayed by World War I, and budgets that ran out.

What you see as you explore was part of the sacrifice and endeavour that changed the fate of an island — from the abandoned tennis court at Waddamana Village to giant handmade spanners at the power station and a canal that looks more architectural than industrial.

The scheme and other hydropower developments that followed it brought change on a scale unparalleled. It created what became a statewide electricity grid, a new economy and a fresh direction.

"...Tasmania was practically destitute of manufacturing industries. Now new industries are starting every few months."

Northern Advocate newspaper, New Zealand, 17 April 1923



JOURNEY INTO CENTRAL HIGHLANDS HERITAGE — and the power of the human spirit

For more information:
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Australian Government

The development of the Highlands Power Trail has been supported by Hydro Tasmania, Central Highlands Council, and the Australian Government.

Photo: Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office

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HIGHLANDS POWER TRAIL

HERITAGE LISTED

Step into an inspiring story

Highlands people dared to take on the impossible, powering a mighty hydro scheme that ultimately created today's Tasmania. Their efforts of yesterday inspire us in our challenges today.

Construction of the Great Lake Power Scheme was a remarkable feat, especially in the early 1900s.



The self-guided trail

Starting your journey from Bothwell, head north to Waddamana Power Station and village. Continue to Penstock Lagoon, the canal and Shannon before your final stop on the trail at Miena Dam, located at the southern end of *yingina* / Great Lake. You can return to Bothwell on the Highland Lakes Road to travel south, or take one of several routes from Miena to continue your travels to the north or northwest.

If you are travelling from the north follow the trail in the opposite direction, with your first stop at Miena Dam. From your final stop on the trail you will rejoin the Highland Lakes Road where you can travel to Bothwell or return to the north.

Travel time: Approximately 2 hours. For a richer and unique experience, we recommend adding extra time to explore the fascinating Waddamana Power Station Heritage Site.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

- Road conditions: Waddamana Road is an unsealed gravel road, accessible by most standard vehicles. Always check current weather and road conditions as snow can occur at any time of year.
- Fuel and refreshments: Available in Bothwell and Miena.
- Electric vehicle charging: Located at Waddamana Power Station.
- Admission: Free entry to Waddamana Power Station Heritage Site. The site is closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day, Good Friday and Anzac Day morning. For details on opening hours visit www.waddamanapowerstation.com.au.
- Facilities: Toilets are available at Waddamana Power Station during opening hours, and there is an electric barbecue on site.
- Mobile access: Limited or no mobile phone service is available along most of the trail.



yingina / Great Lake

Arthurs Lake

Miena

Miena Dam

Australia's largest natural freshwater lake helped transform the island state into an industrial powerhouse and became a renowned fishery for tourists and locals.

Shannon

The settlement was a place of friendship, family and tragedy, all unfolding in exposed conditions on the plateau.

Waddamana Canal

Get a taste of the way workers and families battled the elements and see how a hand-built canal can be a thing of beauty.

Waddamana Power Station

The power station heritage site was the nerve centre for the greatest wave of change Tasmania has seen. The turbine hall will amaze you. Power station entry is free.

Waddamana Village

Get the inside story on a village and community that grew and thrived in tough conditions and isolation. Could you live here?



Penstock Lagoon

Now a fishing paradise, for decades torrents of water were unleashed from the lagoon to feed turbines. But what happens when the lagoon freezes?



Hermitage

Hundreds of workers needed food. Farms like this one, and local families, were enterprising in unexpected ways.

Red Gate Tramway

The ingenuity of the horse-drawn wooden Red Gate Tramway was remarkable. Find out why it succeeded and how it echoes the route for your driving journey.



Bothwell