

The 80-year-old Bradfield scheme is a proposed world-class inland irrigation project that was designed to irrigate and drought-proof much of the north and western Queensland interior. The Scheme required large pipes, tunnels, and dams from the upper reaches of the Tully, Herbert, and Burdekin rivers to feed the Thompson and Flinders rivers. Interest in the scheme has persisted in minor political parties, but studies have dismissed it as lacking in scientific justification, excessively expensive, and overly optimistic. Leon Ashby, with a history of broadacre irrigation and innovation, has solved the central problems in the original scheme and extended it to two larger schemes with much greater efficiencies and beneficial environmental impacts. Ashby's plan is for an entire gravity fed system, obviating the need for pumping water, harvesting flood flows and providing many additional irrigation dams en route. This would be achieved by siting high in the catchment an innovative 2000km contiguous aqueduct that would move the water gently from the highest dams at 800m elevation, over and through the Great Dividing Range plateau to dams at around 200m elevation in the central west. The holding capacity is expected to be 60,000 Giga liter or three times the size of the Murray Darling Irrigation scheme. This would provide 30,000 GL per annum to irrigate approx 30,000 km² of land, more than doubling the size of irrigated land in Australia. In addition, the scheme has the ability to generate GWs of power, control and reduce the flooding flow of coastal rivers, and may reduce coral bleaching, excess nutrients and silt to the Great Barrier Reef from coastal farming and development. Along with other innovations from new technology, this would enable the realisation of the original Bradfield Scheme of opening up large swathes of fertile soil in central and western Queensland for fodder crops, cotton, and horticultural enterprises of all types, providing an estimated additional \$50 billion dollars per annum to the Australian economy, along with jobs, revitalisation of rural communities, elimination of the droughts and flooding rains and creation of a world-class irrigation scheme for rural Queensland.