

B A L L A R A T  
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In 1901 an Order (No. 9) was issued in favour of the Ballarat Tramway Co. but the Company disposed of its franchise to the British Insulated Cable Co. to whom a new Order - No. 17 - was granted.

The latter company evidently operated along the same lines as those adopted by the Brush Co. in Melbourne. An order was also obtained for the Bendigo area and a new Company - The Electric Supply Co. of Victoria - was formed to operate the two undertakings. In each case, the electricity supply was combined with a tramway service and, just as the plant for the Melbourne Undertaking was obtained from the Brush Co., so the cables and overhead equipment for Ballarat and Bendigo were supplied by the B.I.C. Co.

System of supply was 220/440 volts three wire D.C. with 580 volts for the tramways. Supply commenced in 1905.

In 1904, before the undertaking was completed, the franchises for both Ballarat and Bendigo were offered to the Electric Light and Traction Co. but the terms were evidently not considered attractive and no sale took place.

The plant installed consisted of Stirling boilers fitted with mechanical stokers together with 300 kW Browett-Lindley/Silverton generators.

By 1912 the undertaking had grown fairly well and plant at that date consisted of four boilers, three 300 kW reciprocating generating sets and also a 300 kW Brush mixed pressure turbo set.

A 120 kW set was also driven by an Austral Otis engine.

Units sold during the twelve months up to March 31st., 1912, were 1,281,175. Tariff was 6d. per unit for lighting or alternatively a M.D. rate of 9d. and 3d. Power was charged on a sliding scale from 4d. to 1½d.

The undertaking was installed under the direction of Mr. Benjamin Deakin who remained in charge of both Ballarat and Bendigo until 1911 when he retired and Mr. P.J. Pringle took his place.

Early in 1921 the S.E.C. advanced a proposal to instal a transmission line from Yarraville to Ballarat and beyond but this would only be feasible if an assured market for the energy were available.

The transmitted supply would be three phase and if it were purchased for Ballarat would necessitate either the use of convertors or the change-over of the local reticulation.

A conference was held in 1922 and attended by representatives of the S.E.C., the Company, and also of the cities of Ballarat and Bendigo. The Company was willing to purchase energy and change-over its system but demanded that its franchises be extended in order to justify the expenditure incurred in changing over. A satisfactory agreement on this basis could not be arrived at.

The Commission then offered to finance the Councils to purchase the undertakings but stipulated that the undertakings themselves, i.e. the consumers, be held responsible for interest on the sums advanced. It also demanded that the tramways be separated from the electrical undertakings and operated by the Councils. To this, also, the Councils would not agree.

In 1923 the Company evidently recognised the advantages of changing over and applied to the S.E.C. for permission to instal new plant which would generate A.C. In reply, the Commission suggested a bulk supply to the area but the Company did not agree to the terms offered by the Commission and installed its own plant.

This consisted of two Brush-Ljungstrom turbo-alternators of 1,400 kW capacity and generating at 6.6 kV. Installation was completed in 1925. The franchise held by the Company would expire in 1931 and in 1926 the Company approached the Council - and that at Bendigo - with a suggestion that, if the franchise were extended, the Company would make annual payments to the Councils during such extended period.

The Councils referred the matter to the S.E.C., without whose consent no Order could be extended. In its reply to the Councils, the Commission set out its view of the position thus:-

1. It is against the public policy of the State, as declared by Parliament, to permit the continued exercise of a private monopoly in electricity supply:
2. It is the expressed will of Parliament that the services of the State scheme be made available as quickly as possible to every part of the State within economic range of the scheme. To extend the franchise would be contrary to this policy.
3. The Company is not entitled to an extension and there is no obligation upon anybody to acquire its assets. When, in 1923, the Company applied for permission to instal new plant, the S.E.C. had made it clear that there would be no extension of the franchises and that the Commission would not acquire the undertakings as going concerns.  

As the Company had then chosen the alternative of installing plant instead of purchasing energy from the S.E.C., it could not now claim rights.
4. The Company's offer of payment to the Council was improper as such payments would mean the taxation on consumers.
5. The S.E.C. promised the Councils to supply domestic consumers in the area at the rate of 1/3d. per room per month, plus 1 1/2d. per unit and other consumers at a rate not more than 1d. per unit higher than was charged in Melbourne.

While the Company had evidently laid itself open to a reply such as this when it refused a bulk supply in 1923, well knowing that its franchise would only be extended by the S.E.C., the Commission's statement in Para. 1 was entirely incorrect and in Para. 2 was misleading.

Electricity supply in any area is naturally a monopoly and, as the legislation, approved and passed by Parliament, made provision for the issue of Orders to companies, it could not be contended that Parliamentary policy was opposed to such.

It is reasonable to accept the principle that Parliament wished to encourage the use of electricity throughout the State and had made provision for the extension of the Yallourn system into rural areas but this would not preclude the extension of the Orders - even though the S.E.C. had powers to insist upon the Company purchasing its energy in bulk from the Commission.

It was apparent, however, that no extensions would be made to the Orders and in 1929 an Agreement was entered into between the Company and Commission, under the terms of which the undertakings in both Ballarat and Bendigo would be acquired by the Commission.

Provisions of this agreement were as follows:-

1. The purchase price for both undertakings would be £272,000 to be paid to the Company on 30/6/34.
2. The Company would be reimbursed all capital expenditure incurred between 31/3/27 and the date of signing the contract.
3. The S.E.C. would advance all money required for extensions and additions as from that date until the undertakings were taken over. Interest would be charged.
4. Stores to be taken over at book value.
5. The franchises to be extended so as to expire on 30/6/34.
6. During the extended period the Company would be permitted to pay dividends on ordinary shares at the rate of 7% per annum, plus interest on debentures and dividends on preference shares. It would also be allowed to defray the cost of the Liverpool Office. The total would amount to £30,250.
7. The Company undertook:-
  - (a) to hand over the undertakings as going concerns on 30/6/34,
  - (b) to maintain the plant and equipment in a proper manner,
  - (c) to purchase bulk energy from the S.E.C. as soon as such became available,

Ballarat, Beaufort, Beechworth.

- (d) to extend and develop the system to the satisfaction of the S.E.C., and
- (e) to facilitate all activity by the S.E.C. to develop the adjacent area.

This agreement was ratified by Parliament in December 1929 by Act No. 3826.

The Company did not have an opportunity to purchase bulk energy from the Commission as, owing to financial stringency, the transmission line from Yarraville to Ballarat was not constructed until 1942.

The undertaking was taken over by the Commission in 1934 and continued to be operated as a local generating centre during the intervening years. When it obtained possession of the undertaking, the Commission proceeded with the work of changing over the consumers to the 230/400 volt three phase system. It was also necessary to increase the plant capacity in the local station and, in 1937 a third 1,400 kW Brush Ljunstrom set was added and in 1940 a fourth similar set was installed.

Further details of this undertaking will be found in the section relating to the State Electricity Commission.

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#### B E A U F O R T

The Ripon Shire Council was granted Order No. 199 in 1927 and installed a three-phase 230/400 volt, 50 cycle, A.C. system which commenced operations during the same year.

The original plant consisted of a 62 H.P. single cylinder Campbell horizontal heavy-oil engine which drove a 32 kVA English Electric alternator by belt. This was added to by a 26 H.P. Ronaldson Bros. & Tippet engine belt driving a 16 kVA E.E. alternator and later by a 35 H.P. Ruston 4 cylinder vertical engine direct-coupled to a 29 kVA B.G.E. alternator.

Population in the area is approximately 1,500.

Tariff in 1953 was 1/3d. per unit for lighting and 7d. per unit for power.

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#### B E E C H W O R T H

Beechworth was for many years lighted by towns gas, supplied by a local Company. In 1911 there was an effort by a number of residents to persuade the Shire Council to instal an electrical undertaking but without success.