

## ELECTRICITY COMES TO TOODYAY

HASS, English

How did the arrival of electricity change the lives of people in Toodyay?

Students will:

- Reflect on the impact of electricity on daily lives.
- Consider the importance of news media as an information source.
- Analyse a newspaper article about the arrival of electricity to Toodyay.
- Understand how the use and value of places/buildings (ie. Connor's Mill) changed over time.

### ENGAGE

- Have you read, watched or listened to the news recently?
- What sort of things are in the news?
- Why are those things in the news?
- What's the most important news in our area /our state/Australia/the world this week?

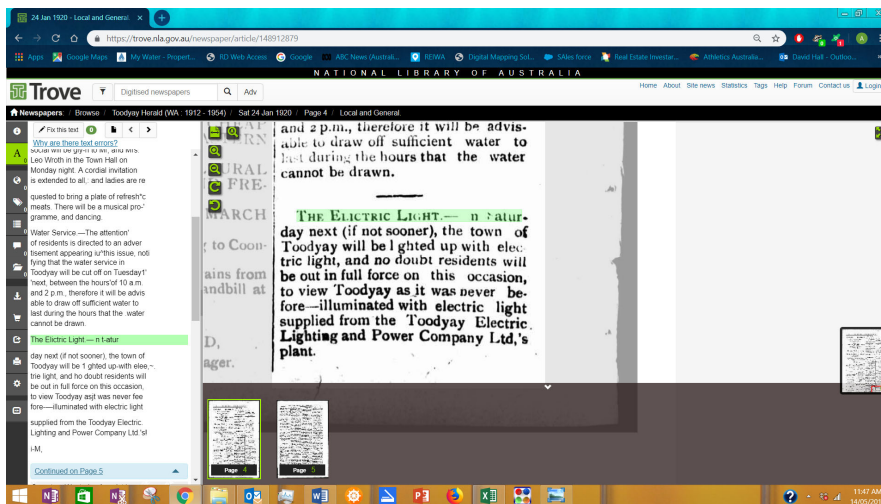
Ideally, give students an opportunity to look through a copy of the day's paper to facilitate discussion of the above.

### EXPLORE

Go to the National Library of Australia Trove website and show students a [news article about electricity coming to Toodyay](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/148912873). You will need to scroll halfway down the article to the section 'The Electric Light'. Explain that Trove holds digitised copies of newspapers from the past.

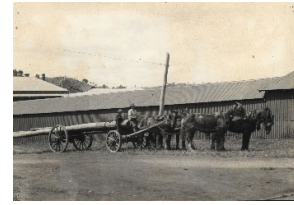
Discuss:

- What newspaper did this article appear in? (information is located at the top of the screen)
- What is the article about?
- What date was this article published on? Can you work out from the text the date that Toodyay got its electricity supply?
- What does the reporter mean by 'no doubt residents will be out in full force'? What does this comment suggest about how important this event is?



### EXPLAIN

- Newspapers are useful sources of historical information. They describe events from the past and offer clues about how people felt about those events at the time.
- Around the world, electricity was first used from around 1879. It arrived in Western Australia in 1888 and the first electric street light in Perth was lit in 1892. However, the building of generators and powerlines was expensive, took a long time, and early technology was not very efficient. (Show photo of power poles carted by horses).
- Initially, the power supply to the town was not dependable, and not available to everyone who needed it. In 1922, power and light was finally provided seven days a week – but only between 4pm and midnight!



### EXTEND

Discuss:

- How might the daily life for people in Toodyay have changed as a result of having electric light?

Show students examples of non-electric equipment which was used to complete everyday tasks.

- What were these items used for?
- How did they work? (As an example, you can show students a video of how washing was done, [using a washboard](#)).
- What electric appliances do we use today that do a similar job as these items? What features do modern items have that make our lives easier?
- Can you think of any downsides associated with having electricity?

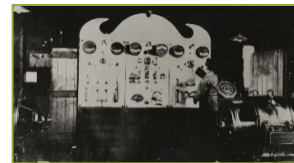
Students can write a new headline for the electricity article, prepare a short newspaper style article about an important event that happened in your class, school or community, or write a letter to the editor expressing their opinion about kids using electronic devices today.

BEFORE ELECTRICITY



- The first electricity plant in Toodyay, operated by the Toodyay Electric Lighting Company, was located in a shed next to the present day Connor's Mill Museum. Connor's Mill was originally a flour mill, but by that time it was no longer operational. A few years later, the power service became the responsibility of the Toodyay Road Board, and the power station moved into the old Mill building itself (show photos of the outside and inside of the building).
- In 1955 the State Energy Commission took over the power supply in Toodyay. The Road Board Power Station closed and the site became run down. It was going to be demolished, but members of the local community successfully pushed for its preservation and the site became a tourist centre, and eventually, a museum.

Why do you think the Toodyay community fought to save Connor's Mill / Road Board building when it was no longer needed as a power station?



### EVALUATE AND REFLECT

Debate, or indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement:  
“Electricity has only made our lives better”.

### WANT TO DO MORE?

- Go back to the Trove Toodyay Herald article. Flick through the different articles and pages of the paper. Compare to a newspaper today and discuss how the news has changed and stayed the same over time.

### USEFUL RESOURCES

- [History of Connor’s Mill.](#)
- ['Power up'](#) 2018 newspaper article, providing a summary of how electricity works, the history of electricity in WA and how/who supplies it today.

**THE ELICTRIC LIGHT.**— n Satur-  
day next (if not sooner), the town of  
Toodyay will be l ighted up with elec-  
tric light, and no doubt residents will  
be out in full force on this occasion,  
to view Toodyay as it was never be-  
fore—illuminated with electric light  
supplied from the Toodyay Electric  
**Lighting and Power Company Ltd,'s**  
plant.

An article from the Toodyay Herald, 24 January 1920  
National Library of Australia <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article148912879>



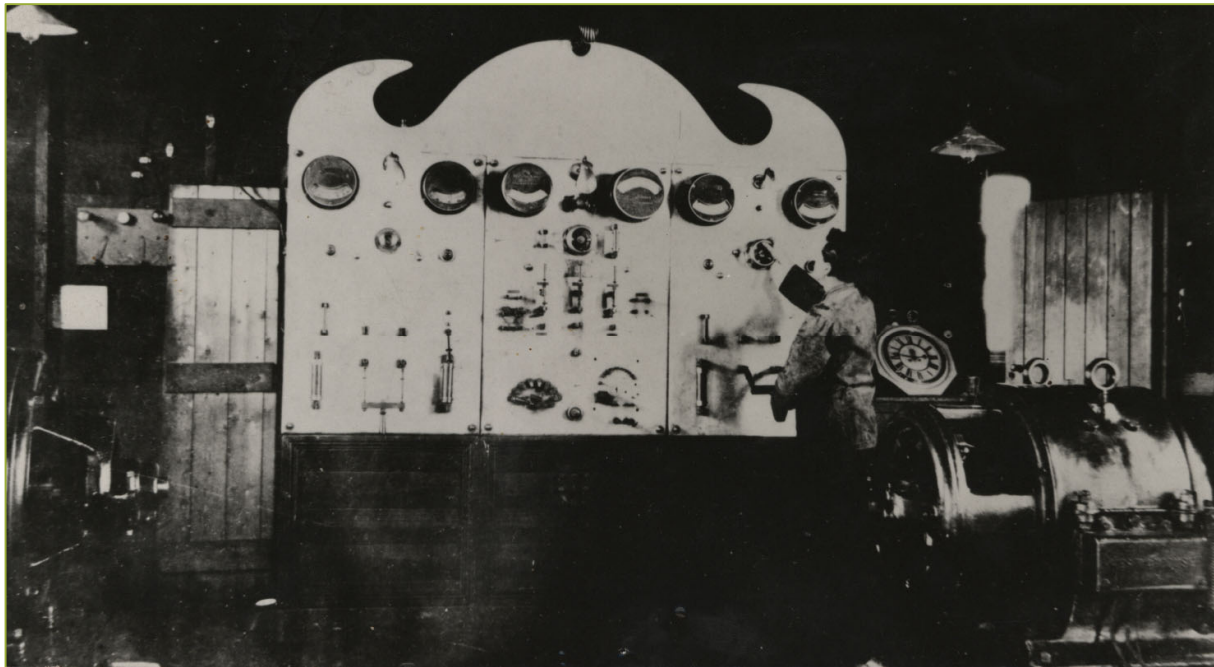
Horse drawn wagon carrying power poles, Clinton St, Toodyay, c. 1920-1930. A note on the back says "After the hole was dug, one of the team of horses was then used to maintain a forward pace as the power pole was hauled into position".

Shire of Toodyay local history collection 2008.52





Connor's Mill museum building, c.1927-1955, when it was used as the Road Board Power Station.  
Shire of Toodyay local history collection 2008.54



Man (possibly Mr N Garvey), at the switchboard of the Toodyay power station c. 1921.  
Shire of Toodyay local history collection 2008.43



Opening of the Toodyay Tourist Centre in the refurbished Connor's Mill building, twenty years after the Road Board Power Station that was housed inside closed down.

Shire of Toodyay local history collection 2001.1137



Milling machinery being installed into the Connor's Mill building, 1994, in order to turn it into a museum.

Shire of Toodyay local history collection 2016.7



## BEFORE ELECTRICITY



Shire of Toodyay local history collection 2001.263



Shire of Toodyay local history collection 2001.891



Shire of Toodyay local history collection 2001.598



Shire of Toodyay local history collection 2001.569