

## **BOUNDARIES.**

The boundaries of Armidale established by the town map of government surveyor John J. Galloway in 1849 became the boundaries of the Armidale Borough. Despite discussion and moves by various councils to extend the boundaries of the Armidale council, it was not until 1961 that the boundaries were changed.

In April 1891 Ald. Meallin moved: 'That a special meeting be called to consider the advisability of extending the boundaries of the municipality'.<sup>1</sup> Mayor Drew said the motion should come from the residents outside the city boundaries and the motion was lost. Three years later, a letter was received from the Local Government Commissioners in November 1894 informing council that under the proposed Local Government Bill there was no limit to the size of a municipality. With this information, it was moved at the council meeting of 27 November 1894 on the mayor's casting vote, 'That it is desirable to extend the boundaries of the municipality'.<sup>2</sup> A committee was appointed to report to council in a week's time on the estimated amount to be derived from this extension. It was also moved a letter be set to the commissioners saying council desired an extension of the municipal boundaries. Mayor Wilson stated he would arrange with the district surveyor Mr McDonald to meet the committee.

A special meeting was held on 4 December 1894 concerning boundaries. A map, prepared by the district surveyor was presented to council and the extensions included the suburban areas of the town on the north, west and south and extended to Commissioner's Waters, east of Armidale. After lengthy debate, it was agreed that the proposed boundaries become the present suburban boundaries thus cutting off an eastern area as shown on the map. In February 1895 council considered the boundaries proposed by the Local Government Commissioners. The boundaries were found to be satisfactory because the commissioners had fixed them following the recommendation by council.

Once it was obvious that a surrounding shire would be formed and the question of shire boundaries arose in April 1905, council appointed a committee of three in May to investigate the boundaries. Six weeks later the committee presented its report and recommended the boundaries of the borough be extended about twenty chains to the west, south and east of the existing boundaries. It was necessary for a petition to be procured setting out boundaries and presented to the Governor as provided by section 27 of the Municipal Act 1897.<sup>3</sup> In July council received a copy of the Shires Bill and the Dumaresq Shire was proclaimed in May 1906 to embrace some 1600 square miles. The boundaries of the Armidale municipality remained unchanged.

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<sup>1</sup> *Armidale Express*, 10 April 1891, p.3.

<sup>2</sup> Council minutes, 27 November 1894.

<sup>3</sup> Council minutes, 27 June 1905.

The district surveyor informed council in January 1918 that the proposed alteration of the city boundary would not alter the municipal boundary. Mayor Purkiss commented, 'In order to dispose of suburban holdings it is necessary that same be outside the city boundary, but there is no law to prevent same being within the Municipal boundary'.<sup>4</sup> The issue of the extension of boundaries again arose in May 1920 and Mayor Curtis referred to his plans for the extension of Armidale's boundaries. In June council received a report that the matter of extending the city boundaries was receiving attention.

Council moved in March 1937 that steps be taken to extend the area of the municipality boundaries and in May council announced the formation of a committee to examine the proposal. In June Dumaresq Shire agreed to meet the City Council and for the shire clerk to prepare a proposal for councillors to consider. The question of extending the boundaries of the council and the securing of an aerodrome for the district were considered at a conference of the council and shire on Saturday 4 August. The Armidale delegates felt the extension of the boundaries was essential if Armidale was to progress and there was a need for the aerodrome with the proposed establishment of the University College. The shire was concerned that the application by council was made before a conference of parties was held. The delegates were prepared to allow the inquiry to decide the matter on the boundaries but its stand would be dependent on the ratepayer's support.

By September 1937 the Department of Works and Local Government had prepared a description of the proposed part of the Dumaresq Shire to be added to the municipality. The department formally advised the shire in October 'that a formal proposal had been submitted by the Armidale Municipal Council to alter the boundaries ... by taking part of the shire'.<sup>5</sup> But the shire rejected the proposal which involved the acquisition of 6000 acres. The department gazetted the proposed altered boundaries on January 1938 consisting of about 7000 acres and called for written objections. Not all Armidale aldermen supported the demand for the extension and council received a petition signed by ninety seven Armidale and district residents, headed by Ald. W.H. Watson in March 1938.

An amendment to the act, gave power to council to apply for an extension of the boundary and the minister to appoint a court of inquiry to hear evidence for and against the proposal. Dumaresq Shire Council was informed in September 1938 by the Department of Local Government of a public inquiry on the proposed alteration of the boundaries. Originally the inquiry was to be held at the Dumaresq Shire council chambers on 11 October but the shire applied for a postponement of six months. The Armidale Municipal Council supported the shire's application and the inquiry was postponed.

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<sup>4</sup> *Armidale Express*, 25 January 1918, p.3.

<sup>5</sup> *Armidale Express*, 18 October 1937, p.4.

E.R. Gallop, an engineer from the Public Works Department visited Armidale on Tuesday 11 October 1938. He informed the local government bodies he was to conduct the proposed alteration of city boundaries early in 1939. The Department of Public Works and Local Government informed council in May 1939 it was communicating with the shire on the proposal. Because Commissioner Gallop was unable to proceed for some time with the inquiry, the Minister for Works and Local Government 'suggested that the council approach the Dumaresq Shire Council with a view to mutual agreement being reached'.<sup>6</sup> Dumaresq Shire nominated two representatives for the conference in November.

Armidale and Dumaresq councils continued negotiations in January and February 1940 but no agreement was reached on boundaries. In March council informed the shire it 'was prepared to accept an area previously defined with the addition of lands west of Martin's Gully and to include the proposed aerodrome and adjacent lands'<sup>7</sup> but the proposals were unacceptable to the shire. Two weeks later, council asked the Department of Works and Local Government to communicate with the Boundaries Commission and request a settlement.

A public inquiry presided over by E.R. Gallop was held in Armidale in May 1940. At that stage, the municipal council was seeking an area of more than 7000 acres from the shire. The Department of Works and Local Government wrote with its decision on 12 July and the Minister L.O. Martin advised the shire he had refused the council's request for extension of its boundaries. Concerned about the number of requests from residents outside the municipality requesting services, council sought advice from the Local Government Association. A.R. Bluett solicitor to the association informed council it was not bound 'to treat persons or institutions outside the municipal boundary on the same basis as those inside the boundary'.<sup>8</sup>

In November 1945 the question of extension of boundaries was again raised and it was felt that a further approach should be made to the Department of Local Government. Council received a form of application from the Department of Local Government to alter the boundaries in December.

In answer to a question in council in May 1946 the building, health and general purpose committee replied the question of municipal boundaries was receiving consideration. A further proposal for extension of the municipal boundaries was placed before council on Monday 8 July. The committee recommended 7000 acres should be taken from the shire and the extension should also take in the aerodrome site and the New England University College. Initially the matter was

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<sup>6</sup> *Armidale Express*, 11 October 1939, p.8.

<sup>7</sup> *Armidale Express*, 15 March 1940, p.4.

<sup>8</sup> *Armidale Express*, 1 December 1943, p.11.

deferred but two weeks later council decided 'to proceed with an application to the State Governor'.<sup>9</sup>

The Department of Local Government noted that council's 1946 application was identical to that which led to a public inquiry in May 1940 and the Department wished to know of the changing circumstances in September 1946. At the time, 'Aldermen noted the growth of the University College, the increasing importance of the aerodrome and extensions of gas, water and electricity as reasons why the proposal should be proceeded with'.<sup>10</sup> Despite the opposition, council determined to proceed with its application in October. It was evident that a major claim was 'the City Council should have control of the evident growth and planning, especially in the western area, where the aerodrome and university are situated'.<sup>11</sup>

The request for extension of the boundaries was refused by the Minister and council was advised by the Department of Works and Local Government in May 1947. The minister was of the opinion that a prima facie case had not been made out and in June 1948, the Department of Local Government advised the council:

before any modified application for alteration of the boundaries of the Shire of Dumaresq and the City of Armidale is submitted for the Minister's consideration, it would be advisable for the council first to refer details of its proposal to the shire council for comment.<sup>12</sup>

In July 1948 council announced its intention to approach the shire to discuss the proposal to alter the boundaries and in reply the shire indicated its willingness to meet in August.

By May 1950, owners of properties outside the boundary at West Armidale had once again petitioned council for an extension of city amenities. The newly formed Armidale Industrial Council sought the views of the various progress associations 'in extending town amenities outside existing city boundaries'<sup>13</sup> in June. In reply, the North Armidale Progress Association formed in April 1950, 'affirmed its opposition to extension of municipal boundaries unless residents outside the area asked to be included in the municipality'.<sup>14</sup>

The number of people living outside the city boundary and applying for a water supply raised the question of extending the city boundaries in May 1953. The *Armidale Express*, 27 May 1953 commented: 'a logical solution to the problem would be to extend the city boundaries to include those areas where people have

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<sup>9</sup> *Armidale Express*, 24 July 1946, p.6.

<sup>10</sup> *Armidale Express*, 2 October 1946, p.6.

<sup>11</sup> *Armidale Express*, 16 October 1946, p.4.

<sup>12</sup> *Armidale Express*, 9 June 1948, p.3.

<sup>13</sup> *Armidale Express*, 30 June 1950, p.3.

<sup>14</sup> *Armidale Express*, 18 August 1950, p.16.

already built or will build in the not too distant future'. Early in June Ben Venue residents were informed by council that it would not approve water extensions to their properties. Council decided that month to discuss with Dumaresq Shire Council the problem of extending services to closely settled areas outside the city boundary. Armidale resident Z.J. Buzo felt that an extension of boundaries was not warranted and commented 'with proper planning the present area could accommodate comfortably double the existing population'.<sup>15</sup>

The further rejection by council of the request from Bellevue residents for extension of services led to an editorial comment in the *Armidale Express*, 25 August 1954. The editor stated: 'The city's boundaries ... are no longer adequate and should be extended to include settled urban areas adjoining and areas of likely further settlement'.

In April 1955 the shire took action to re-open negotiations on the supply of water and sewerage to boundary residents and to appoint a town planner at £100 per year. The *Armidale Express*, 15 April 1955 commented 'probable boundary extensions of Armidale at some future date lie behind the decisions'. Council agreed to meet with the shire to discuss the issue. The question of extending the city's boundaries was again raised in council in October. 'The Mayor was requested to discuss with the President of Dumaresq Shire Council the advisability of a conference between the city and shire councils to coordinate the town plans of the two bodies'.<sup>16</sup> The shire was prepared to meet council but felt that such a meeting should take place in public.

The president of the Armidale and District Ratepayer's Association, C. Skinner called for an extension of the city boundaries in January 1956. He said 'there is more non-ratable property per head of population in Armidale than in any other town in Australia'.<sup>17</sup> At the time, the extent of such property was 11% consisting of ecclesiastical, educational and government owned properties but excluded the creek area.

Council took action in October 1957 to meet with the shire to discuss the extension of boundaries and the provision of services in the additional area. The two councils agreed in principle to an extension of city boundaries in February and an outline of greater Armidale was presented to council in July. Council decided to forward a proposal for the city boundaries to the Minister for Local Government, Mr Renshaw; a proposal which included the placement of the university within the city boundaries and the shire's position turned to opposition 'because the City's proposals' embraced 'very considerably more territory than had previously been agreed at a round table conference'.<sup>18</sup> The present boundary of

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<sup>15</sup> *Armidale Express*, 8 June 1953, p.6.

<sup>16</sup> *Armidale Express*, 19 October 1955, p.3.

<sup>17</sup> *Armidale Express*, 6 January 1956, p.4.

<sup>18</sup> *Armidale Express*, 25 August 1958, p.6.

the municipality was 2060 acres and the council asked the Department of Local Government to transfer 4099 acres of the shire to them.

Objections to the proposal were received for a period of one month from 21 January 1959. A public inquiry was conducted into the plan by Commissioner K. Hawkshaw, an officer of the Department of Local Government and commenced on 7 July in the council chambers. For a number of days representatives of the city council and shire, solicitors and residents of Armidale and district gave evidence. The boundary extension proposal was approved and the Local Government representatives commenced meetings in March 1960 to determine the transfer of land. Within three weeks agreement had been reached and it was decided that Armidale's boundaries were to be extended on 1 January 1961 with the addition of 2770 acres lying within the shire. The additions included the University of New England, Bellevue, Ben Venue, filtration plant, the garbage dump, New England Girls' School, the golf course and cemetery.

The extension of boundaries in January 1961 meant that the municipality increased from 3.3 square miles to 7.6 square miles. It was the first change since the municipality was established in 1863. The new population of 12 075 made Armidale the 18th biggest city in N.S.W. in terms of population.

The city engineer P.G. Agnew stated in November 1963 'City boundaries in South Armidale would have to be extended in the future'<sup>19</sup> but the shire rejected any further extensions in December. In April 1964 a meeting was sought with the shire in an attempt to prevent the urban sprawl outside the city.

The first Local Government Boundaries Commission was appointed on 31 January 1964. Mayor Piddington and several aldermen met with the Boundaries Commission on Tuesday 5 October 1965. The commission told the Armidale representatives that extension of the boundaries 'should be discussed with the Shire Council before a formal approach was made to the Commission'.<sup>20</sup> At the time Armidale representatives were anxious to control residential development on the fringe of the municipality by encircling it with a non-urban belt which could be subdivided into land of two to five acres.

The *Armidale Express*, 20 August 1965 announced the final stage of the city survey. The first stage had begun two years earlier. 'The Surveyor-General (Mr L.N. Fletcher) said ... that the survey would firmly establish all types of boundaries in the city'.

A report on the extension of the boundaries prepared by the town clerk R.A. Browne and engineer K.O. Gentle and discussed by council in private, was forwarded to the Department of Local Government in February 1967. The plan revealed that council sought 'to take over more than a two and a half square miles

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<sup>19</sup> *Armidale Express*, 27 November 1963, p.8.

<sup>20</sup> *Armidale Express*, 15 October 1965, p.3.

of land outside its boundaries in the Dumaresq Shire'.<sup>21</sup> The area involved about 1800 acres and 300 shire residents and was based principally on areas to the north, east and south of the city.

In March 1968 ratepayers in Dumaresq Shire protested by petition against boundary alterations suggested by Armidale City and Guyra Shire councils. Because of the possibility of shire being abolished, council advised the 'Department of Local Government it now considers municipal and shire boundaries should remain unchanged'.<sup>22</sup> The Local Government Boundaries Commission heard submissions in September relating to alterations of the boundaries of Armidale City Council and Dumaresq Shire. Council presented a submission for the acquisition of 1800 acres but also gave advice 'the acquisition' was 'not being sought at the present'.<sup>23</sup>

In its report published in April 1969 the commission expressed disappointment with the presentation of the case by the Armidale City Council because it 'had not taken the present opportunity to adjust its boundaries to provide for the city's future needs'.<sup>24</sup> That November, Mayor Failes told council in his annual report that major boundary extensions would be necessary for the proper future planning of Armidale.

A delegation from the council met the shire in February 1970 and 'an extension to the city's boundaries, taking in 3100 acres'<sup>25</sup> was requested by council. A week later, council decided to consider the financial implications of the boundary request before further approaches were made to the shire. By March the shire had agreed to transfer to council about 3100 acres on the northern and southern boundaries of Armidale where housing development had been most active. Negotiations continued throughout October between the Department of Local Government, the shire and the council concerning procedures, assets and liabilities and services. The proclamation published in the *Government Gazette*, 18 December 1970 became effective on 1 January 1971. The extensions increased the city area by 3400 acres to about 13 square miles and the population of the city passed 18000.

Arising out of the Boundary Commission of 1964, the Ratepayer's Association (N.S.W.) drafted an unsuccessful scheme for a system of rating based upon income. Although the proposal was rejected by the government, 'the Association's submission was responsible for the appointment of inquiry into local

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<sup>21</sup> *Armidale Express*, 24 February 1967, p.1.

<sup>22</sup> *Armidale Express*, 20 March 1968, p.1.

<sup>23</sup> *Armidale Express*, 13 September 1968, p.1.

<sup>24</sup> *Armidale Express*, 21 April 1969, p.6.

<sup>25</sup> *Armidale Express*, 27 February 1970, p.1.

government areas and their administration on 17 December 1971'.<sup>26</sup> The Barnett Committee was instructed to report on local government areas and the provisions of the Local Government Act 1919 relating to the administration of council business. C.J. Barnett was a former Under Secretary of the Department of Local Government and its membership was drawn from local government, business and academic fields. The issue of Armidale and district boundaries arose once again in March 1972 when the New England Local Government Association received the terms of reference of the 'Committee of Inquiry appointed to consider, among other things "present local government areas"'.<sup>27</sup>

The Barnett Report, 'Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Local Government Areas and Administration in N.S.W.' was presented to the Minister for Local Government and Highways, the Hon. Sir Charles Cutler in December 1973. It recommended that the shires of Walcha, Uralla, Dumaresq and Guyra be linked with Armidale to form one district council. A member of the committee, Councillor G.I. Ferris did not favour incorporation of provincial cities within districts. Council agreed with Councillor Ferris and accepted a proposal to increase the city to 80 square miles with resultant amalgamation of surrounding shires. On 10 April 1974 the minister announced that legislation would not be introduced to amalgamate councils into district councils.

The Local Government Boundaries Commission visited Armidale from 15 to 17 October 1974 for preliminary discussions on the need to review the boundaries of the city and the effect on adjoining shires. Negotiations between council and the shire broke down in November. At that stage, council felt that Armidale should be expanded to 89 square miles whilst the shire felt the city should only be expanded to 55 square miles. Both had presented their proposals before the N.S.W. Boundaries Commission in October. In November the chairman of the commission, councillor G.I. Ferris heard evidence from a number of district shires and councils. Council again took action in December to ask the minister to expand the city to 89 square miles. Council rejected the advice from councillor Ferris that such action be delayed until a financial survey of the New England councils was completed and to also consider what should be done with the remainder of the shire. The financial survey prepared by the Boundaries Commission rejected council's plan for the amalgamation of Walcha, Uralla, Guyra and Dumaresq Shires into two new shires. The report stated 'savings would be even greater if the four shires were united to form a single new shire'.<sup>28</sup>

In November 1975 the council and the shire announced that an agreement had been reached 'on an extension of the city's area to more than six times its current

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<sup>26</sup> F.A. Larcombe, *The Advancement of Local Government in New South Wales 1906 to the Present. Volume 3*, Sydney University Press in association with the Local Government Association of New South Wales Shires Association of New South Wales, Brisbane, 1978, p.416.

<sup>27</sup> *Armidale Express*, 15 March 1972, p.1.

<sup>28</sup> *Armidale Express*, 3 September 1975, p.1.



size'.<sup>29</sup> A public meeting called by the council and shire was held on 26 November 1975 but only fifty people attended. A further meeting was held on 21 January 1976 to discuss issues arising from areas to be transferred to the city. The 150 who attended, declared total opposition to the extension of the boundaries by 178.7 square kilometres. This move cast 'doubts on the future of an agreement reached only a month ago between the City Council and Dumaresq Shire'.<sup>30</sup> But the Armidale City Council refused to withdraw its submission. Council was informed in July by the Minister for Local Government and Planning, Mr K Jensen that 'the priorities set out by the Premier Mr Wran, excluded any consideration being given to proceeding with large scale amalgamations by legislation at the moment'.<sup>31</sup>

Following his previous visit in November 1974, Councillor Ferris opened another four day hearing at Armidale in November 1976. Again submissions were presented by individuals, groups, as well as Uralla Shire Council, Armidale City Council and Dumaresq Shire. The boundaries commission released news in March 1977 that one huge shire was to be created around Armidale. This proposal had been presented by Dumaresq Shire at the inquiry. But in July 1978 the Minister for Local Government, Harry Jensen announced that boundaries of Armidale City and the surrounding shires of Uralla, Guyra and Dumaresq are to remain unchanged.

The Armidale City Council's boundary request in July 1979 involved the extension of the city boundaries to take in some 400 square kilometres of surrounding shires. It extended west to Saumarez Creek, north to Newholme, Sunnyside Road and included Puddledock Dam, east to Burying Ground Creek, Blue Hole and south to the Black Lane. Not surprisingly, a fierce debate took place in the newspapers and radio between representatives of Armidale and surrounding Dumaresq, Guyra and Uralla Shire councils.

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<sup>29</sup> *Armidale Express*, 5 November 1975, p.1.

<sup>30</sup> *Armidale Express*, 23 January 1976, p.1.

<sup>31</sup> *Armidale Express*, 16 July 1976, p.5.