

## **Prospect County Council Windsor Branch Office**

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Whether paying electricity bills, selecting a new electric appliance for the home or attending cooking classes, many Hawkesbury residents will remember visiting the Prospect County Council Windsor Branch Office on the corner of George and Catherine Streets.

Prospect County Council (PCC) was formed in January 1957 by the NSW government to manage the distribution of electricity to Western Sydney. Initially taking in the four council areas of Holroyd, Blacktown, Baulkham Hills and Fairfield, the City of Parramatta was added to the area of jurisdiction from 1 July 1958.

Local authorities were not in agreement with the proposal however the council areas of Liverpool, Penrith and the Municipality of Windsor (which included Richmond) were added to the PCC district by the NSW government from 1 January 1960. In some areas within the Colo Shire Council and the former Municipality of Castlereagh (now part of City of Penrith) electricity continued to be distributed by the Hawkesbury Development Company from about 1932 until 1965 when the area was taken over by PCC.

Two councillors were drawn from each of the member council areas to serve on the board of PCC. Delegates would be chosen following the local government elections which occurred every three years.

Initially in 1960, PCC opened a temporary office in the former Richmond Municipal Council Chambers (now Richmond Library) prior to acquiring the Windsor site for £5,400 in 1960. Constructed of concrete and glass on the site of Clement's Grocery Store in 1963, the Windsor Branch Office screamed of progress, change and modernity amid the nineteenth century streetscape of George Street.

Electricity was first connected to the larger centres of Windsor January 1916 and Richmond October 1913, however, supply to other towns and outlying areas of the Hawkesbury were slow to be connected. Electricity came to North Richmond in 1934, East Kurrajong by the end of 1948 while outlying areas such as Mt. Tomah, Laughtondale, Macdonald River and Colo had to wait until the 1960s. When household connection to electricity was effected most households used the new power source only for lighting. Homes in rural areas simply did not own any electrical appliances. Prospect County Council recognised the potential for the marketing and promotion of electrical appliances through retail showrooms and 'Home Management' centres.

Together with twenty-nine other county councils, PCC was a member of a purchasing and merchandising group enabling a wide range of household appliances to be on display at Windsor. Demonstrators were also available to visit the home of customers to give advice on the use of newly purchased appliances.

From 1961 to 1974, PCC used a large mobile display unity to take the demonstration kitchen and appliance showroom to local school fetes, agricultural shows and outlying parts of the district.

A quarterly 'Better Living Bulletin' was posted out to customers with the electricity bill. The bulletin included recipes, warnings about the dangers of tampering with electricity supplies and the advantages of appliances such as the chest freezer. 'Lemon Delicious' pudding was a favourite from August 1977. From the 1990s, tips for cutting home energy consumption, costs of underground power and notices regarding Prospect's community consultation program were also included.

By the late 1980s attendance at the regular cooking classes had declined and the decision was made to discontinue this program in most areas except the head office in Parramatta. The quarterly bulletin was now more a vehicle for advertising and the dissemination of information than a home economics pamphlet, however, space was still found for seasonal recipes such as warming winter soups and summer salads.

Much has changed since the 1990s with deregulation of the supply of electricity in NSW. In 1991 the entity was renamed Prospect Electricity and operated as a NSW government business enterprise. In 1996 Prospect Electricity merged with Illawarra Electricity to form Integral Energy. The Prospect County Council building still stands marking its place in the history of the district and reminding us of another time...