

Our proud history

Women of the Snowy Scheme

During the construction of the Snowy Scheme, men outnumbered the women because of the tough labouring nature of the majority of the jobs. Although there were fewer women who worked on the construction of the Snowy Hydro-electric Scheme, the women who did, played a significant role.

+ Doctors



Dr Ina Berents was the doctor at Cabramurra, the highest township in Australia. During the winter, the mountain roads were closed and Dr Ina Berents' patients varied from mothers giving birth to men with injuries from tunnelling accidents.

Teachers



One difficulty facing migrants was communication. The official language of communication was English. The Authority employed 38 English teachers, running regular classes for the workers in the evenings.

The Duchess

According to Snowy folklore an endearing personality was Georgina McQuade, the accommodation officer at Cabramurra. The story goes that on the day of her arrival, Cabramurra was experiencing extreme weather conditions with heavy snow falls. She walked into a packed canteen of workers at the end of a day's shift. Suddenly, in the middle of the noise and boisterous activity, the workers saw a vision in stiletto heels and a stylish flowing outfit enter the room. The entrance was so dramatic and out of place, that the room fell silent as she became the centre of attention.

Georgina believed a lady should maintain her standards, whatever the odds. She dressed up for every occasion in the most stylish fashion of the day and dyed her hair every possible colour. Her quest for elegance in adversity set an example that others followed. Engineers started arriving at social functions in dinner jackets (but still in gum boots) and their wives would appear in the latest city fashions. In fact, Cabramurra had its fair share of magazine features of the social events. Georgina earned the affectionate life-long nickname as, '**The Duchess**'.

► Fast fact

Women also made up a significant number of secretarial, telegraphy, catering and cleaning roles.



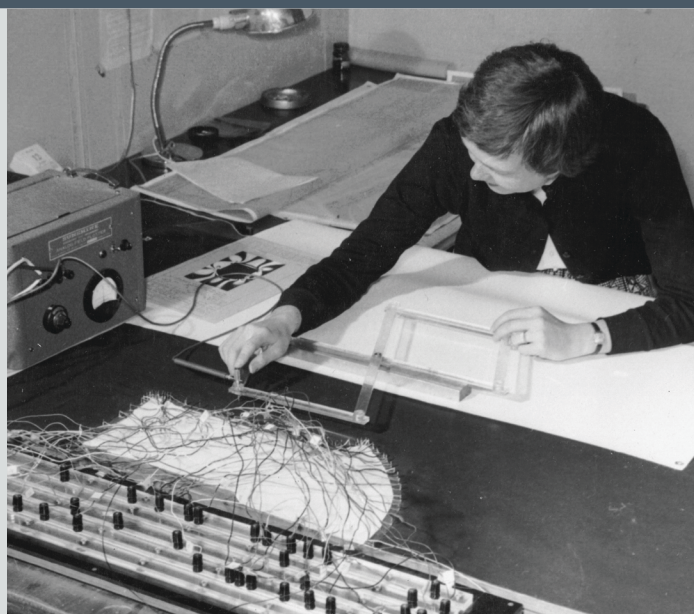
Architects

A woman was the first architect employed in 1950, contributing to construction design on the mighty Snowy Scheme.

Drafters and engineers

Women led the drafting unit in the early days and there was even a female engineers. As drafters, the women were responsible for filling in technical details of the design using drawings, rough sketches, specifications, and calculations made by engineers, surveyors, architects, or scientists. These drawings and specifications were used to construct the Scheme on site.

Ildi Botka, one of the female engineers, undertook hydrological investigations, flood studies, sediment and evaporation studies, snow-melt forecasting and writing computer programs!



Nurses



During the construction of the Snowy Scheme, Sister Passmore was a bush nurse based in Jindabyne.

Scientists



Scientists played a key role during the construction of the Snowy Scheme. From analysing cement to micro-distillation and dust counting, their role was incredibly diverse.