



Rivers of Gold: Understanding how the gold rush changed Victorian rivers

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Tullaroop Creek at Eddington

COPY OF PETITION BY FARMERS AND OTHERS IN CARISBROOK
DISTRICT.

To the Honorable the Minister of Lands.

The Memorial of the undersigned Farmers, Householders, and Residents, living on the banks
of the Deep Creek, lying between Clunes and the Loddon River :—

HUMBLY SHEWETH—

1. That the chief industry of Clunes consists in working the gold-bearing reefs of that place, and that the quartz after being crushed, and the gold extracted, creates refuse or sludge, which is ejected into the creek to a great and alarming extent.

2. That so large is the quantity of this deleterious matter that has been and is continued to be thrown in, that, during the past few years, deep waterholes that formerly served as natural reservoirs during the drought of summer, are now completely filled up, and in some parts, for miles in succession, no water can be obtained during that season.

3. That the essential point of our memorial, however, is to draw your attention to the immense amount of damage done to the farmers and others by the deposit of sludge upon the alluvial flats, by the periodical inundation of the creek.

4. That many of us have lost as much as twenty to one hundred acres of our best land, by its having been covered, in some places two feet deep, by the drift from the quartz-crushing companies of Clunes.

5. That we beg to inform you that the sludge in question is of the most deleterious nature, that it contains qualities highly inimical to vegetable life, and that nothing will grow upon the land after its deposit.

6. That we may here also observe that the creek water, in consequence of the impurities it contains, is rendered totally unfit for human consumption, and that neither for culinary nor lavatory purposes can it be used until it has undergone a tedious and expensive mode of purification.

7. That taking into consideration the vast expenditure the Government has been put to for "Water Supply," and the numerous and extensive reserves that have been proclaimed for the ostensible purpose of water accommodation, it would indeed be a great anomaly were the natural streams allowed to be polluted and filled up with the sludge and *débris* of mining companies.

8. That we are fully sensible that the industry of gold mining should be fostered and encouraged, still we cannot but feel it an injustice that one section of the community, many of whom at present are residents of other lands, should reap wealth and fortune at the expense and ruin of others, particularly when the great cause of the mischief can be obviated.

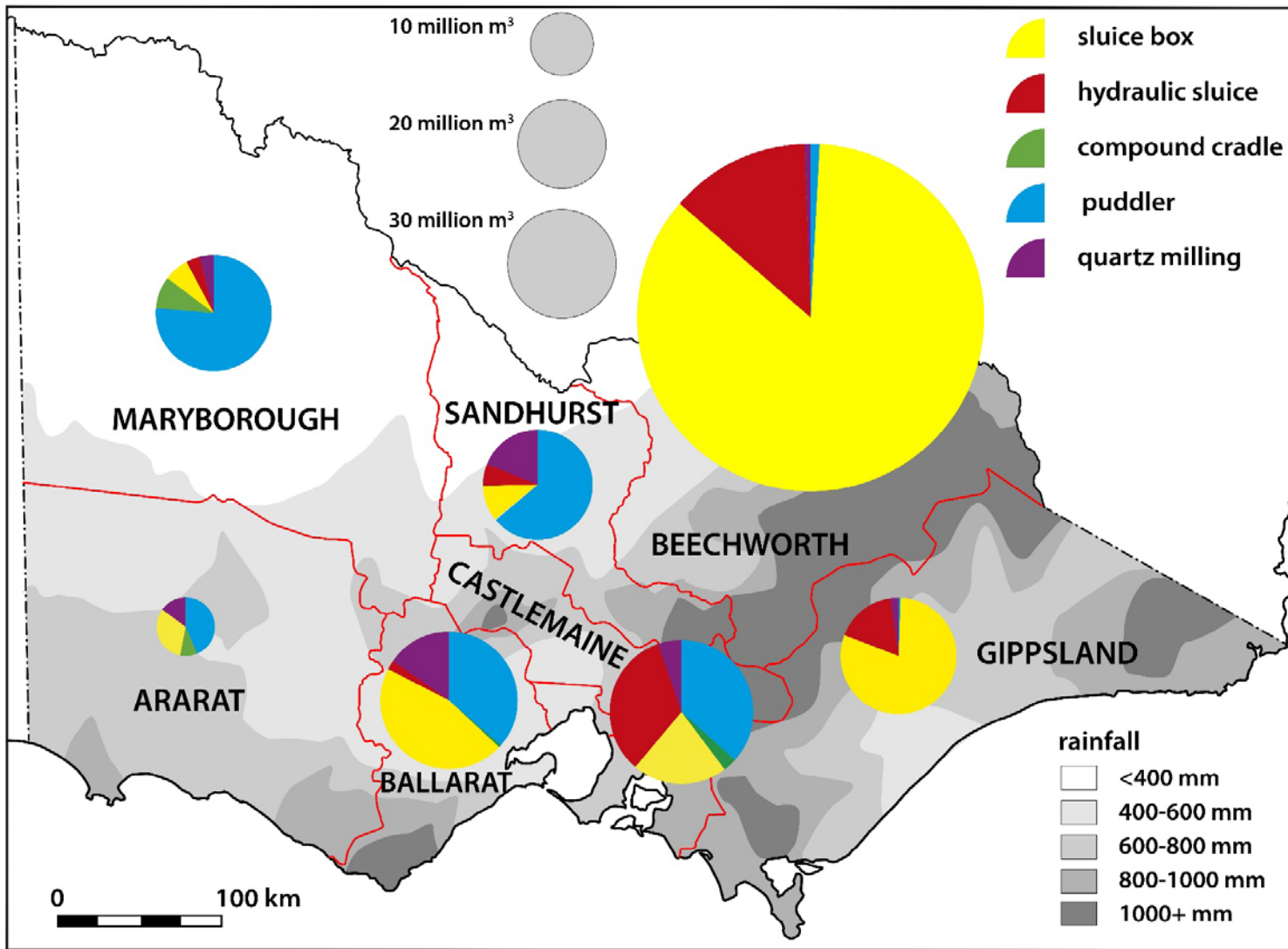
9. That we would most respectfully suggest that an order be issued that the respective gold companies should retain their tailings on the surface of their own leases, as this could be effected at little cost, the machinery that is now used to eject it into the creek being adapted for turning it on their own land.

10. That your memorialists, in conclusion, humbly submit that the boon they solicit is but that one of the good gifts of Providence may reach their homesteads in its purity, and free from injurious polluting influences placed in it by the gold-mining companies of Clunes.

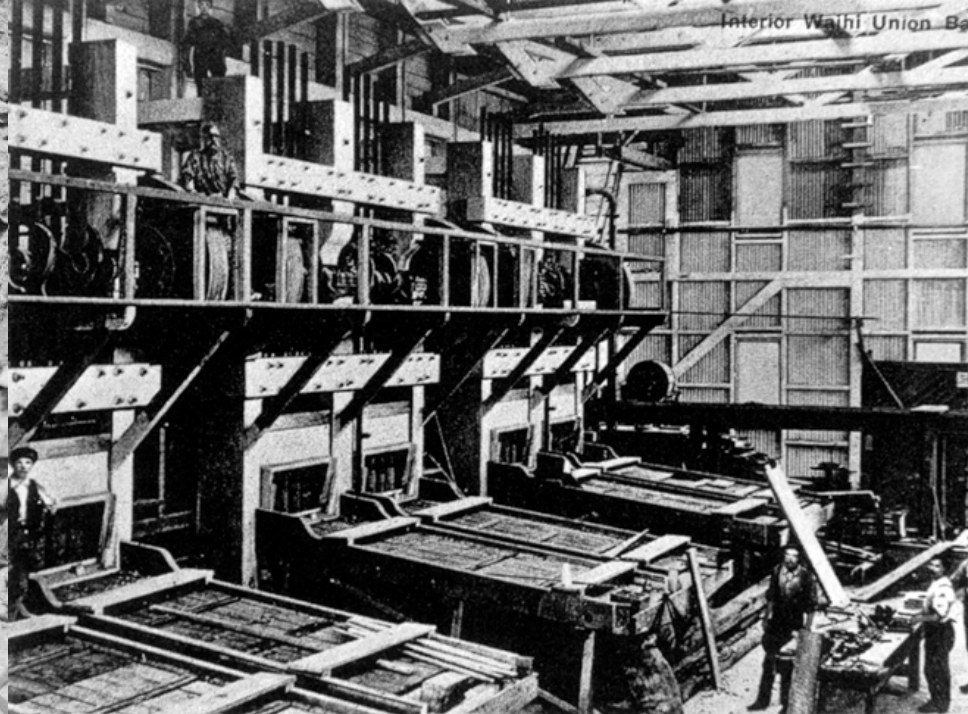
And your memorialists, trusting that the boon they ask may be granted, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

Rivers of Gold Project

- Collaboration between archaeologists, geomorphologists and geochemists (La Trobe University, University of Melbourne and Lincoln University (UK); ARC Discovery)
- Evaluate legacy gold mining tailings (sludge) at catchment scale (Loddon, Goulburn and Ovens rivers)
- Identify and reconstruct pre-European floodplain surfaces in mining affected catchments and through this modify our understanding of 'reference condition'



**Total production of alluvium by technique for each Mining District,
1851-1900 = 650 million m³**



Interior Wash Union Ba



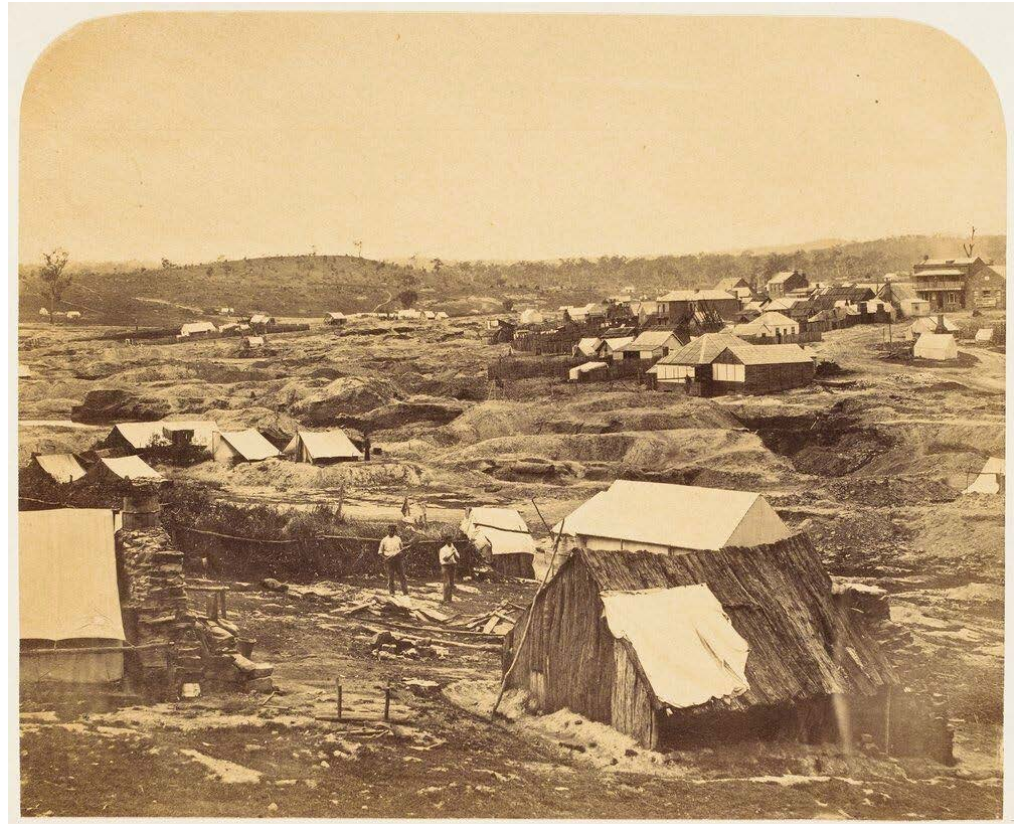
575
Horse Panning Machine Forest Creek

James S. Blodgett
Melbourne 1858

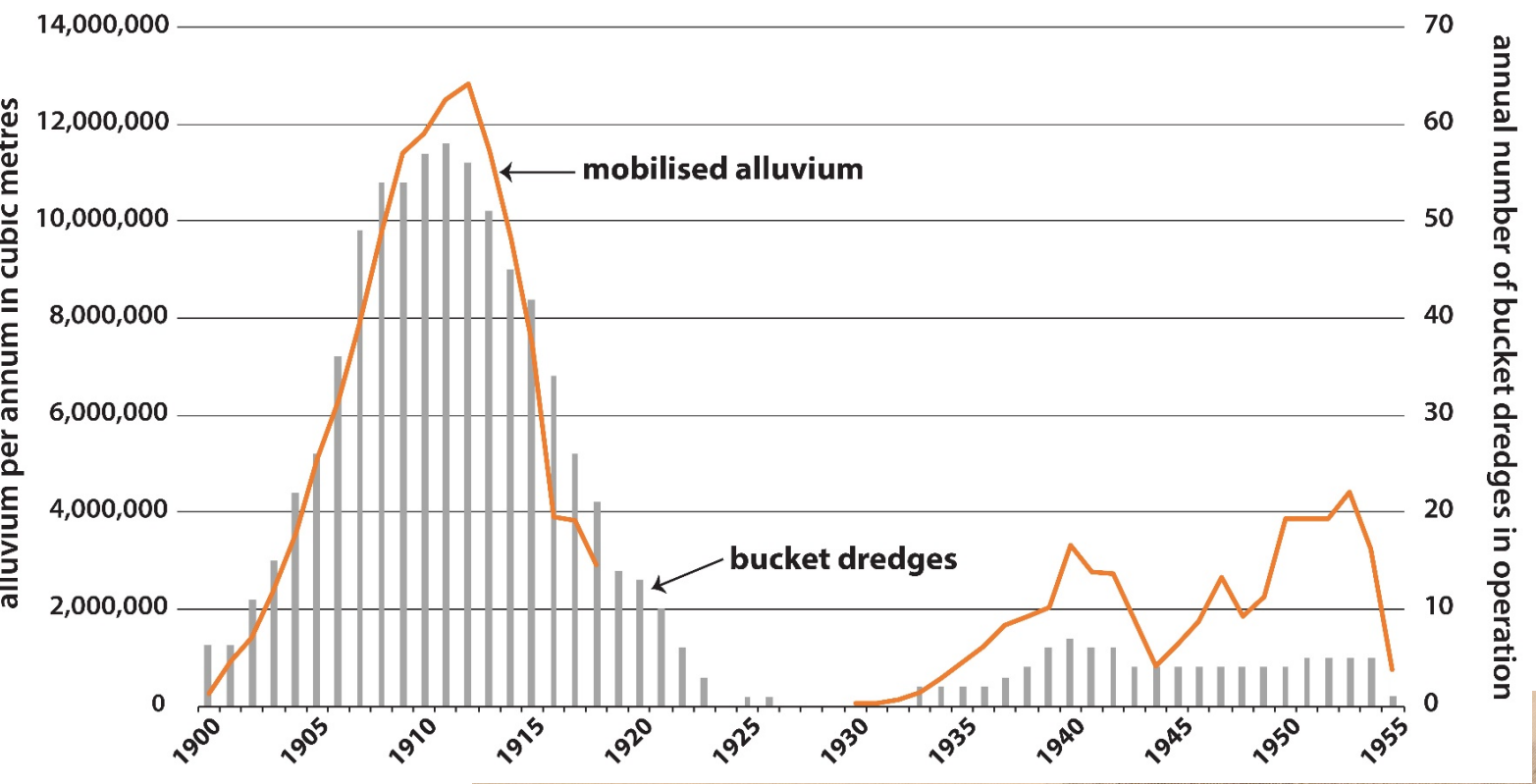




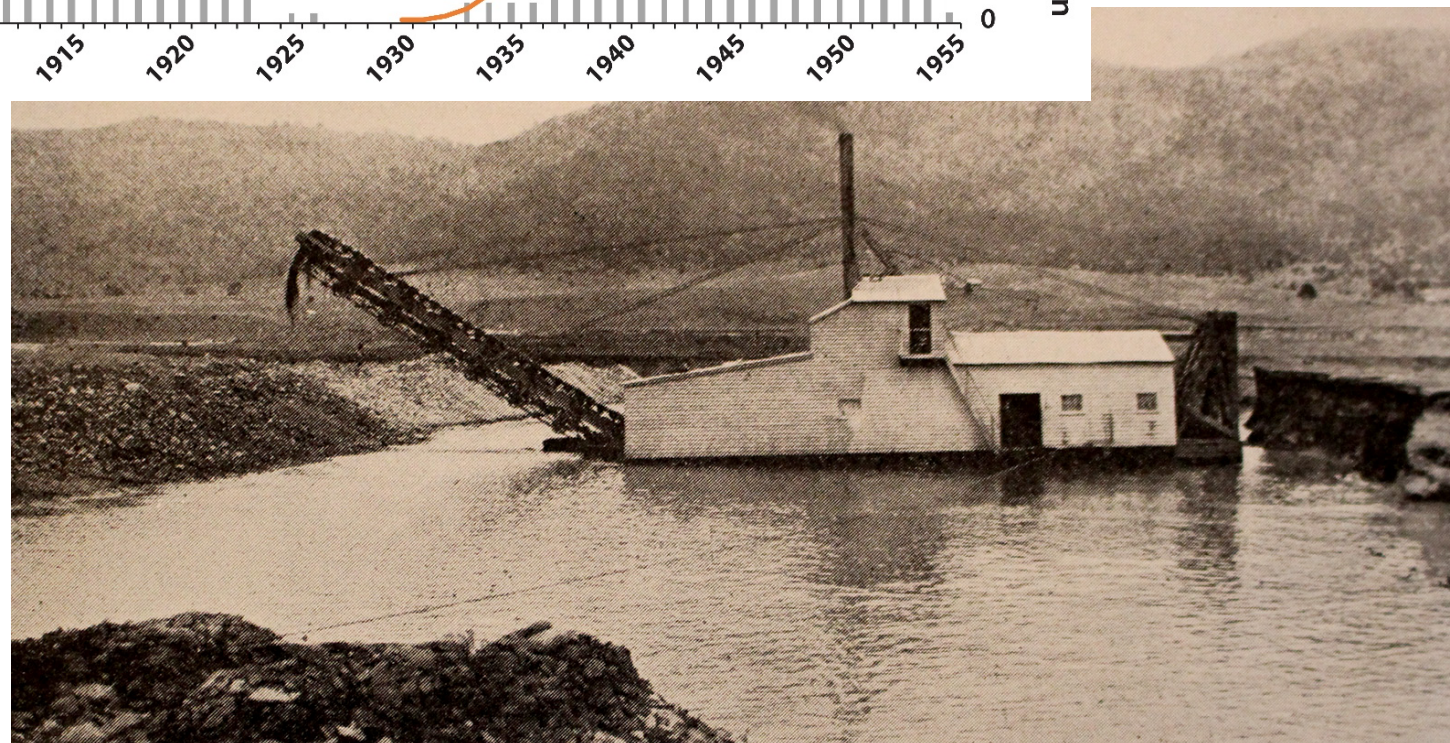
Guildford

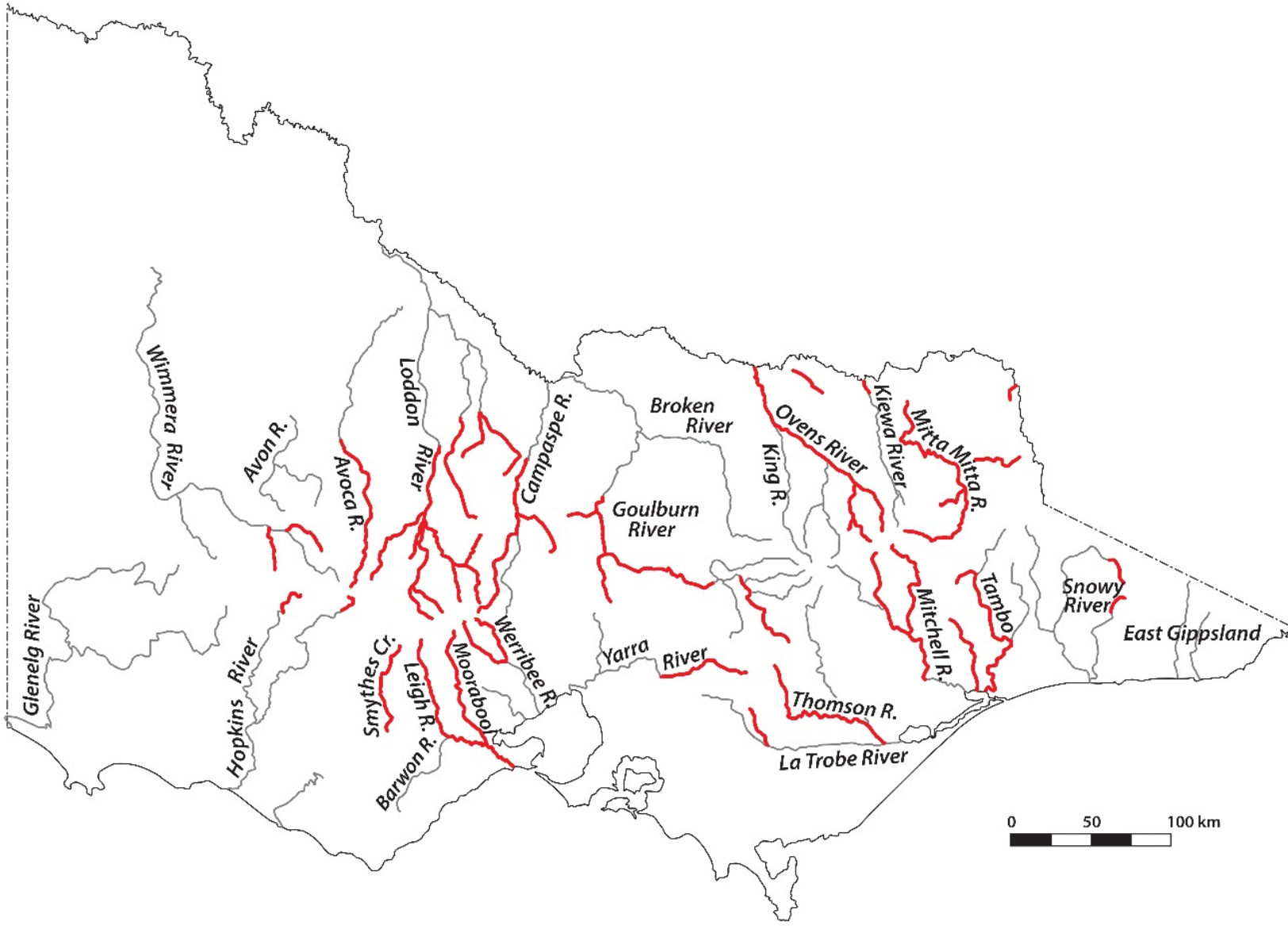


Forest Creek, Castlemaine

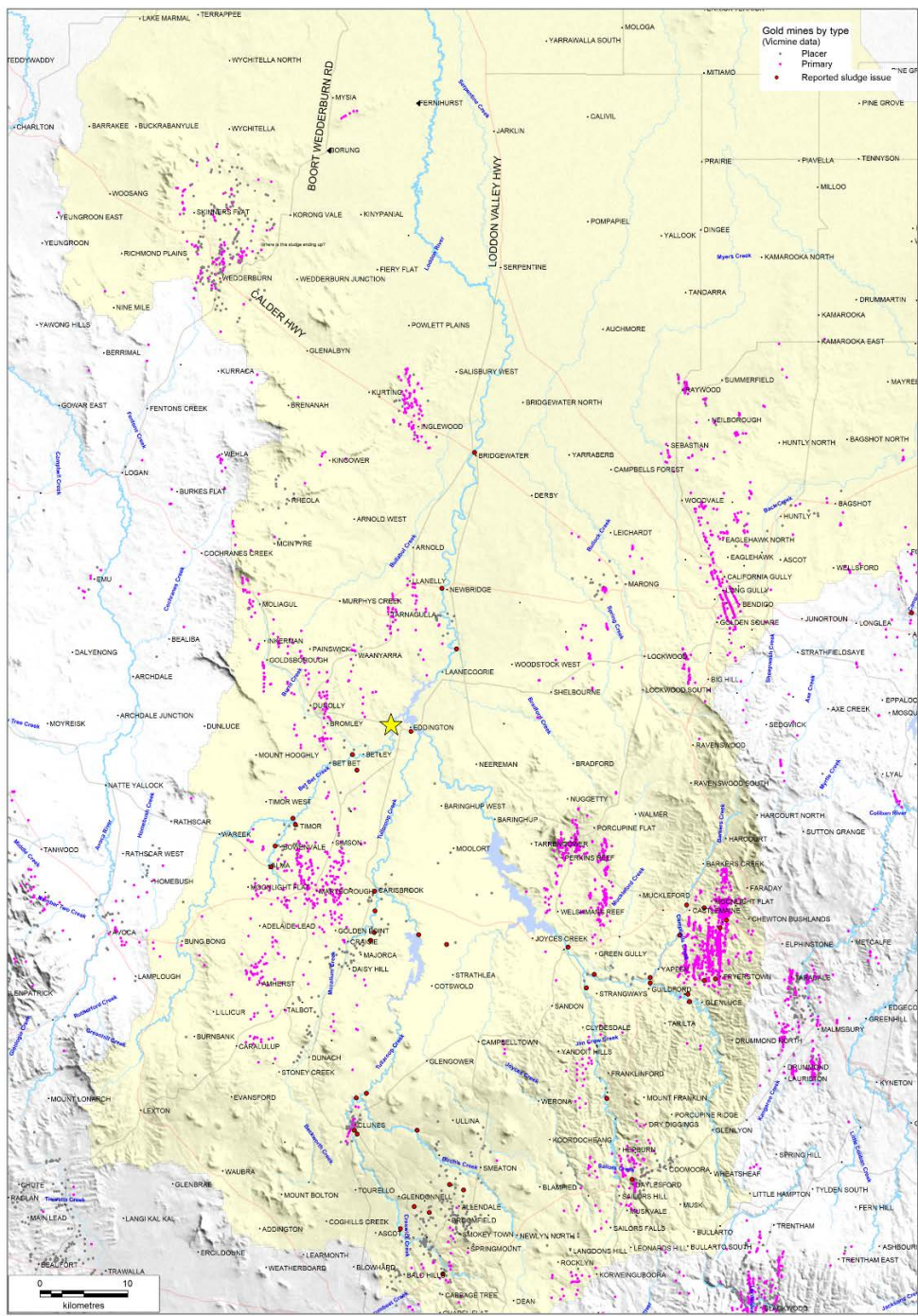


Total production of sediment by bucket dredging 1900-1950s, 175 million m³





Known extent of complaints about sludge damage, 1887



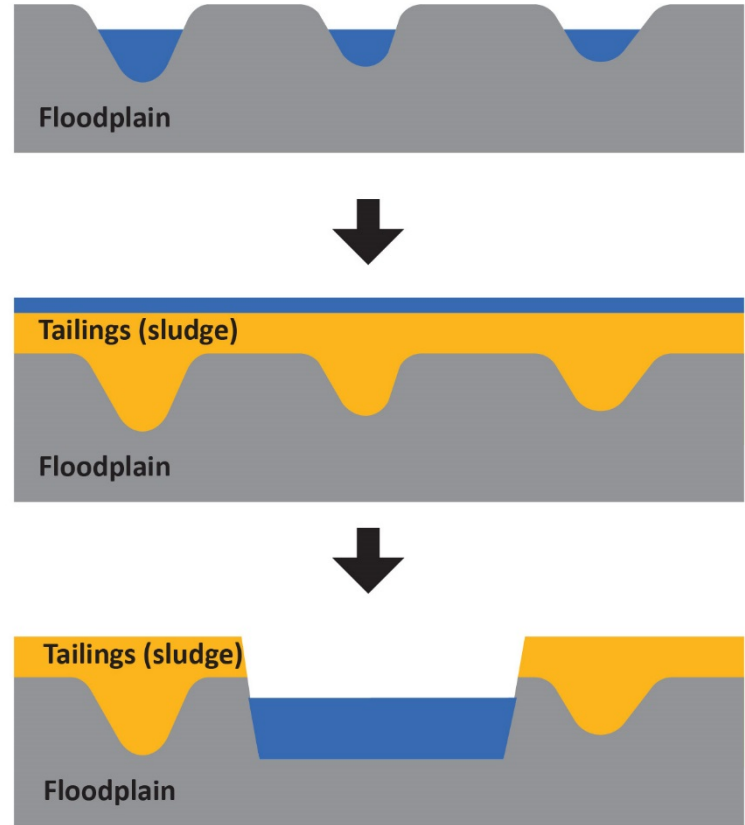


Leigh River at Shelford, 1909



*Original floodplain surface
(contact)*

Loddon River at Baringhup





Loddon River at Newstead

Acknowledgements

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