

Roma Street Parkland

There was considerable debate on the future use of this site, including suggestions to locate a major sports stadium here. In 1999, the Queensland Government decided to integrate the former rail land with the existing Albert Park, and released plans to redevelop the area as a new parkland for Brisbane. Development commenced in January 2000, and the new Roma Street Parkland opened in April 2001.

A complete history of the Roma Street Parkland site is available at www.romastreetparkland.com

2002, View across Roma Street Parkland and the Lake Precinct.



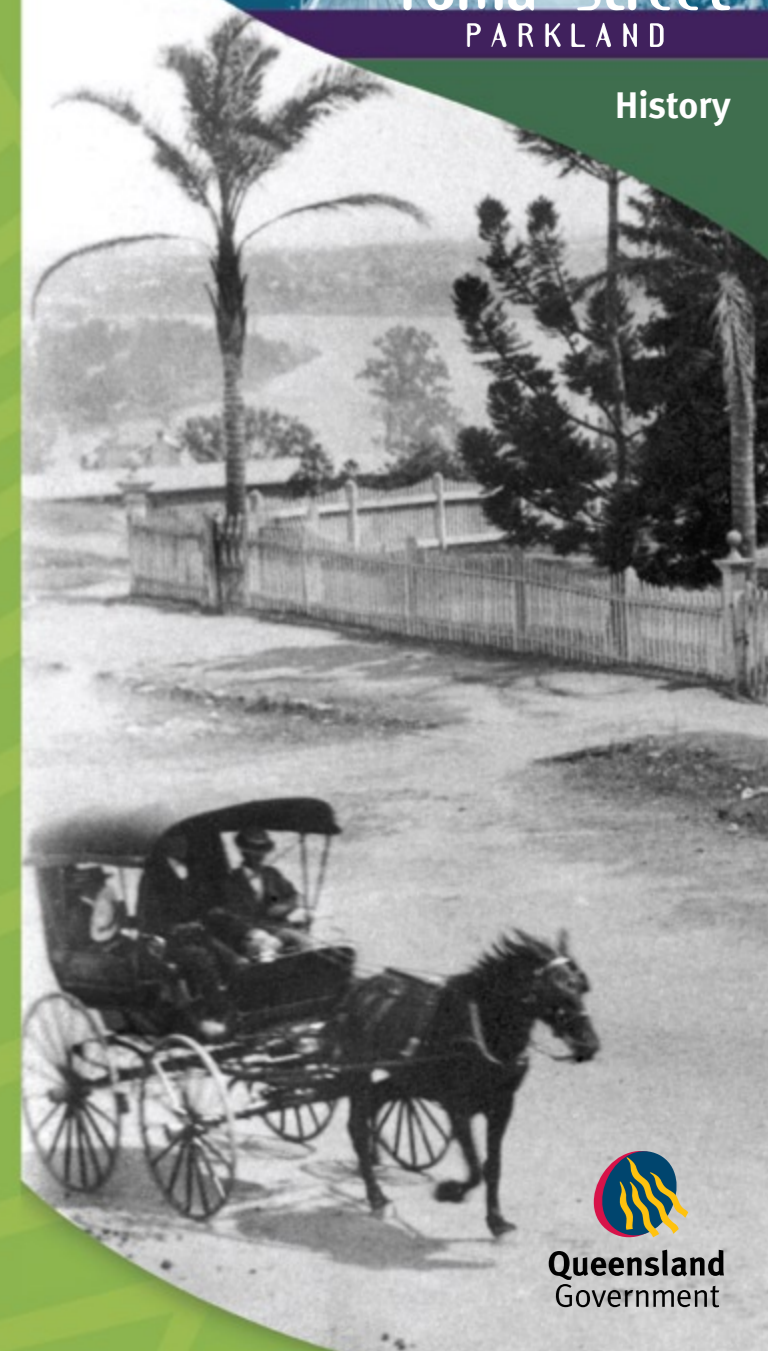
1940, Trainee soldiers wait to embark on a train to Caloundra Camp. (JOL73715)

Despite further development in the 1960s and 1970s, the limitations of the site and the increasing mechanisation of freight handling and use of containers, eventually led to the relocation of the rail freight facility to Acacia Ridge in 1991. Roma Street Station was redeveloped to service a major Brisbane suburban and intercity network, as well as the Brisbane terminal for long-distance and interstate trains. However, a significant portion of the Roma Street yards became vacant land providing opportunity to review the use of a major inner-city government land holding.

Front cover photograph: 1890s, Albert Park viewed from Wickham Terrace. (JOL23911)



History



Queensland
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c1887, View of Roma Street Parkland precinct.



Early Brisbane

From the time Brisbane Town was first settled, the high ground to the north west of the township was known as Green Hills. The area was too steep for normal development, and surveys as early as 1842 indicate that the area was proposed for public parkland. The creek that originated in this area fed a reservoir in the vicinity of the new Magistrates Courts at George, Turbot and Roma Streets, which provided water for the settlement until 1859. Today, the Parkland's innovative water features, which link the upper and lower parkland, reflect the original water source.

History celebrated

The opening of Roma Street Parkland in 2001 marked a new chapter from a varied and colourful past.

The area now occupied by the Parkland incorporates an early Brisbane park and land previously used for an orphanage and a railway goods yard. Adjacent areas (bound by Roma Street, Albert Street, Wickham Terrace, College Road and Countess Street) were used for the Brisbane Grammar School, the first Brisbane railway station, agricultural and produce markets, a power station and a gas works.

Prior to European settlement in 1825, local Aboriginal people used the area for perhaps thousands of years. Tom Petrie's *Reminiscences of Early Queensland*, compiled by his daughter in 1904, recounts a time when, as a boy in the 1840s, Tom observed a major gathering of Aboriginal groups from south-east Queensland in the Roma Street area:

Once there was a great gathering from all parts of the country, the different tribes rolling up to witness a grand new corroboree that the Ipswich tribe had brought. ... Altogether there were some seven hundred blacks, and they were camped in this wise: The Brisbane, Stradbroke Island, and all from the Logan up to Brisbane had their camp at Green Hills (overlooking Roma Street Station...), the Ipswich, Rosewood and Wivenhoe tribes were on Petrie Terrace, where the barracks are and the Northern tribes camped on a site of the present Normanby Hotel.

Albert Park

In September 1877, the Queensland Government gazetted a little over 10 hectares of land below Wickham Terrace as the *Albert Park and Recreation Ground*. The Government appointed trustees and provided funding to develop and maintain the new park. Gardens with trees and walking paths were constructed, as well as playing fields and sporting facilities. In 1891, the trusteeship of the park was reassigned to the Brisbane Municipal Council. Near the Wickham Terrace boundary, two concrete shelters constructed as air raid shelters by the Brisbane City Council in 1942 are a reminder of WWII. Today, Albert Park forms the Upper Parkland.

c1912, Albert Park from Wickham Terrace. (JOL191191)



c1874, View of Roma Street, showing Brisbane Grammar School. (JOL162685)



Railways

The belated extension of the Western Railway to Brisbane in 1875 was heralded by the construction of a major terminal station in Roma Street on land resumed from the Brisbane Grammar School. The school relocated to its current site on Gregory Terrace, and the substantial neo-Gothic school building at Roma Street was used by the Government to accommodate the Commissioner of Railways and other agencies such as the Department of Public Works.

Roma Street station became an important part of Queensland's rail network. When built, it connected Brisbane to Toowoomba and Warwick. In following years, the Western Railway extended to Charleville, and the Southern Railway to Warwick extended to Wallangarra, facilitating the first passenger trains between Brisbane and Sydney in 1888.

By 1882, a railway from Roma Street to Sandgate was completed, paving the way for a Northern Railway to Bundaberg by 1891 and Rockhampton by 1903. In 1889, a tunnel connected Roma Street to Brisbane Central station in Ann Street. In 1978, the Merivale Bridge enabled the Sydney train to terminate in Roma Street once more, after 58 years at South Brisbane.

The development of Queensland's railway network brought a steady increase in traffic at Roma Street and led to continual improvement of rail facilities at Roma Street station. Adjacent land added to the railway reserve



1953, Roma Street railway goods yard, now the Lake Precinct (JOL38432).

enabled the expansion. A major redevelopment of the goods yards between 1911 and 1934 included the lower portion of Albert Park and today, part of the Parkland's Lake Precinct. The steep terrain required extensive excavation to provide a level area for the goods yard and was not completed until 1920. A total of 554,300 cubic metres of rock and earth were removed – the equivalent of 110 football fields one metre high – leaving an artificial escarpment at the boundary of Albert Park. It is still apparent today in the dramatic change of level between the Lake Precinct and the Upper Parkland.

c1918, Excavation of land for extensions to Roma Street Goods Yards. (JOL37398)

