

## Heritage Citation



### Downey Park (includes sporting uses areas)

#### Key details

**Addresses** At 70 Noble Street, Windsor, Queensland 4030

**Type of place** Sportsground, Park

**Period** Interwar 1919-1939

**Lot plan** L888\_SL806405; L1\_SP163909; L2\_SP163909; L2\_RP18540; L1\_RP70580; L3\_RP70580; L3\_RP18540; L9\_RP70585; L17\_RP70585; L16\_RP70585; L11\_RP70585; L12\_RP70585; L15\_RP70585; L605\_SL2393; L14\_RP70585; L13\_RP70585; L5\_SP163909; L4\_RP85617; L2\_RP70580; L2\_RP95212; L1\_RP95212; L5\_RP85617; L5\_SP104135; L1\_SP104135; L3\_SP163909; L404\_B3179; L434\_SP135389; L8\_SP163909; L434\_SP135389; L4\_SP163909; L6\_SP163909; L7\_SP163909; L3\_RP158782; L2\_RP66835; L1\_RP841314; L20\_RP85617; L8\_RP70585

**Key dates** Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004  
Date of Citation — April 2011

**People/associations** Development of women's sport in Brisbane (Association); Ernest Downey (Association); Jessie Groom (Association)

**Criterion for listing** (A) Historical; (A) Historical; (G) Social; (H) Historical association

Under development since 1931, Downey Park has become strongly associated with the development of women's sport in Brisbane. The site was the focus of a great deal of flood mitigation work from the late 1940s, which, along with land acquisitions expanded the Park's area. Since then local women and the wider community have gone to great efforts to develop the park to support women's sporting aspirations. It was the first and only women's sports reserve in the city and has played host to many Queensland and inter-state Carnivals and Championships and several international competitions.

## History

This park was named 'Downey Park' in 1948 to honour the contribution made to the local community by Alderman Ernest Downey who had represented the local community on the Windsor Town Council and then, after the amalgamation of Greater Brisbane, on the Brisbane City Council. Officially dedicated to women's sport in 1959, the Park has provided training facilities for many women's sports as well as playing host to countless sporting carnivals and competitions since the 1950s.

Originally, much of what now constitutes Downey Park comprised part of an area subdivided in the late nineteenth century into large suburban allotments fronting Gould Road and Creek Terrace on the southern side of Breakfast Creek. North of the creek were the much smaller residential allotments fronting Garden Street, Green Terrace and Melbourne Street in the Swan Hill Estate. Much of the land was low-lying and subject to flooding.

After the severe flood of February 1931, a meeting of prominent Swan Hill and Valley businessmen urged Brisbane City Council to investigate the cause of the severe flooding and to take steps to alleviate the situation. Over the next ten years, Council proceeded to straighten, widen, deepen and divert the creek. A number of sections of the creek altered markedly. Fill was added in a number of areas and swampland drained.

In 1948, flood mitigation works in this vicinity resulted in the formation of what to-day constitutes Rasey Park, on the southern side of Breakfast Creek, and much of what is now Downey Park on the northern bank of the newly canalised Breakfast Creek. Around this time, twelve blocks of land originally on the southern side were transferred to the Parish of Enoggera and thirty-five blocks totalling a little more than four acres were transferred to the Parish of North Brisbane. For the next thirty years, the area named Downey Park in 1948 grew as a result of flood mitigation works, acquisitions of flood prone properties by Council and the incorporation of a small area of parkland between Vine Street and Newmarket Road.

Over the same period, the determination and hard work of countless hundreds of volunteers, service clubs and women's sporting clubs has resulted in the development of facilities to serve the needs of affiliates of the Queensland Women's Amateur Sports Council and the generations of school children who have honed their skills in various sports on these grounds. A number of Olympians have received their early training there. The Australian Olympic softball team has also trained at this venue.

Prominent among those countless women associated with the Park and instrumental in its early development were Jessie Groom, Lady Mayoress, and instigator of the Women's Amateur Sports Appeal Committee and Ruby Robinson, journalist. The park is not only the first and only women's sports reserve in the city, but since the

Women's Amateur Sports Appeal Committee accepted tenancy of Downey Park in 1959, it has also played host to many State and inter-state Carnivals and Championships and several international competitions.

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## Statement of significance

### Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

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#### Historical

##### CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history because it reflects the growing importance of women's sport in Brisbane in the mid to late twentieth century.

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#### Historical

##### CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history as its extent reflects the commitment to flood mitigation of various Brisbane City Council administrations over a number of decades.

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#### Social

##### CRITERION G

The place has a strong or special association with the life or work of a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons as it is a site that has been dedicated to the advancement of women's sporting aspirations since the late 1940s.

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#### Historical association

##### CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of importance in the city's or local area's history

for its association with notable local sporting personalities, other noteworthy local women, and for its association with civic dignitaries such as Jessie Groom and Alderman E. Downey, after whom it was named in 1948.

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## References

1. Brisbane City Council Park Information files
  2. Jenkins, L., *A Women's Place: The Downey Park Story*, Brisbane: Brisbane City Council, 1997
  3. Hacker DJ., et al, *Herston Recollections and Reminiscences*, Brisbane: Qld Women's Historical Assn., 1995
  4. *North-West News*. 8 August 2001, p.14.
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**Note:** This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

Citation prepared by — Brisbane City Council (page revised February 2025)



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