

Heritage Citation

King Edward Park & Jacob's Ladder

Key details

Addresses	At 190 Wickham Terrace, Brisbane City, Queensland 4000; At 224 Turbot Street, Brisbane City, Queensland 4000; At 206 Wickham Terrace, Brisbane City, Queensland 4000
Type of place	Stairway, Park
Period	Federation 1890-1914
Lot plan	L461_SL3741; L409_SL1633
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Citation — April 2002
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (B) Rarity; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic; (E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association

King Edward Park is an important green space linking the CBD to the historic precinct of Wickham Terrace. It is an integral part of the green ridge-line formed by the Wickham Terrace parks. The tree-lined Jacob's ladder provides a striking terminus to the vista along Edward Street and has long provided an important and unusual pedestrian connection between the City and Spring Hill. The sandstone air raid shelter facing Turbot Street is a rare stonework example of the public shelters erected in Brisbane during World War 2.

History

In 1891 an area of land between Turbot and Edward Streets and Wickham Terrace was gazetted as a reserve for recreation and described as R620, Portion 327 Parish of North Brisbane. It came under the control of the Council of the Municipality of Brisbane as trustees. The Park was initially known as "Wickham Park" or "Observatory Park" prior to 1911 and was set aside as a water reserve. From 1911 it gained the title "King Edward Park" due to its view of Edward Street and in memory of the late King Edward VII. An obsolete 24-pounder gun was added as ornamentation. The land was officially resumed for park purposes in November 1919.

The section of steep pedestrian pathway known as “Jacobs Ladder” is first described in Council minutes for May 1920, when the existing pathway was to be updated. Rockeries and flowers had been recently added, and the minutes describe the park as having become popular with city workers.

The present form of the footway was constructed in 1921, consisting of steps and landings 6.0m wide. In February 1936 a proposal was put forward by the Minister for Health and Home Affairs to resume the park as a public library and art gallery. Sections of the park were resumed due to the construction of the Dental Hospital in 1939. A request to the City Council from the President of the Queensland Draughts Association led to the construction of an oversized concrete draughts board in 1938 near the border of the park and the old observatory.

A stone and reinforced concrete air raid shelter was constructed in the park during 1942 as part of a Brisbane-wide programme of air raid shelter construction for civilian protection, in response to fears that the city may come under attack from Japanese carrier-based aircraft. The King Edward Park shelter survives as possibly one of only two which were constructed in stone. The other stone shelter was constructed near the Windsor Town Council Chambers and has been demolished.

In 1958 the State Government refused the City Council's request to turn the park into a car parking station, as the Government still intended to use the site for a future Art Gallery and Library. In 1960, after complaints about the condition of the site, control of the park passed from the State Government to the City Council. In 1961 the current graded walk was added along with a rockery in the upper section and a cantilevered lookout in the Turbot Street section. Steps and benches were added to the former air raid shelter. The existing layout retains much of the Harry Oakman design of 1961. Oakman was employed as Chief Landscape Architect in Brisbane City Council between 1946 and 1963. In 1968 the nearby Dental College requested that a service road to their site be constructed through the park. This was refused.

In the mid-1980s the historic Trades and Labour Hall located next to Jacob's ladder was demolished to make way for a new multi-storeyed office block. Sculptures were added to the park in 1988 by local sculptor Wendy Mills. The park is currently popular with employees working in nearby buildings during lunch hours.

Description

King Edward Park is a steeply sloping garden that connects Wickham Terrace and Turbot Street. Adjoining the eastern boundary of the Park is a road reserve occupied by a concrete staircase known as Jacob's Ladder. The Park is highly visible from the CBD, terminating an important vista along Edward Street and providing a verdant setting for some of Brisbane's oldest buildings - the nearby Windmill and Reservoirs on Wickham Terrace. Together with Wickham, Albert and Observatory Parks, King Edward Park forms a green ridge to the north of the CBD.

In 1990 the Park was reopened as a sculpture park and various works are permanently installed throughout the Park. At the bottom of the park, facing Turbot Street is a rare stone air raid shelter.

The steep slopes of the Park have been shaped into a series of terraced lawns and planted embankments, the latter retained by bluestone walls or in parts by an unusual “patchwork” wall of concrete and stone. The site is

dominated by large figs and pines. The topmost lawn accommodates an oversized concrete draughts board and an uncredited stainless steel sculpture. The other sculptures are by Robert Parr (in white painted steel), Fumio Nishimura (stone), Robert Morris (painted steel) and John Fitz-Walter & Jennifer Farley (ceramic & glass).

Jacob's Ladder

The stair consists of 10 flights of concrete steps connecting Wickham Terrace and Turbot Street. Three of the stair's landings extend into the Park to form seating alcoves. A concrete retaining wall forms an upstand to the stair on the western or Park side and supports a white timber picket fence beside all but the lowest two flights of the stair.

Condition and Integrity of the Site

King Edward Park has undergone incremental changes over the years. The planting, lawns and sculptures appear to be in good condition.

The air raid shelter stonework appears to have been recently cleaned and re-pointed. The concrete roof slab, which was reported as subject to "severe spalling" in 1992, has been reconstructed, replicating the original off-form boarded finish to the soffit.

The concrete steps that form Jacob's Ladder feature minor cracking.

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:

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

As an early Brisbane inner-city park, established for recreational purposes

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage

As the site of Jacob's Ladder, an unusually long public stairway

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage

As the site of a rare sandstone bus shelter-type World War 2 air raid shelter

Representative

CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places

As the site of a sandstone bus shelter-type World War 2 air raid shelter that demonstrates the in-built adaptivity of the shelter to post-War use

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

As a green space that connects the CBD with Wickham Terrace, terminates an important vista along Edward Street and forms part of the green ridge line visible from the CBD

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

As the site of a well-crafted, sandstone World War 2 air raid shelter that contributes to the visual amenity of Turbot Street

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

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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.

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