



GRAND DESIGNS: With construction starting in 1920 Brisbane City Hall was officially opened in 1930 and remained the state's tallest structure until the rise of the Westpac building on Queen St in 1970.

How a growing city reached for the sky

GRANTLEE KIEZA



Once the mightiest building in the state, Brisbane City Hall now stands in the shadow of giants but there's a whole lot more still to come

ON THIS weekend 90 years ago the *Brisbane Courier* published photographs of the city's rapidly changing skyline.

The photographs were taken from the top of the tallest building in the state – the new City Hall that was still two years away from its official opening but which, at 92m, towered over the rest of the city.

It was a grand view up there on the clock tower, looking down on Adelaide St, the old *Brisbane Courier* building, two reaches of the

Brisbane River, the wharves at Circular Quay and Kangaroo Point.

The City Hall is still a grand presence on King George Square but 90 years on, the skyline of modern day Brisbane is undergoing an even more dramatic change with more than \$20 billion in projects due for completion by 2025, including the Cross River Rail, Queen's Wharf, Brisbane Metro, Brisbane Live, Howard Smith Wharves and the Millennium Square project at Bowen Hills.

The promised development represents the most significant infrastructure spend in Brisbane's history.

Ninety years ago our City Hall was the biggest show in town. The original foundation stone was laid way back in 1917 and then a second and current foundation stone was placed there in 1920 by Edward, Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII.

City Hall was occupied by council staff from January 1928 and the building quickly became Brisbane's showpiece for the world.

It was the culmination point of the grand parade for aviator Bert Hinkler after his monumental flight from England a month later.

The official opening of City Hall was held on April 8, 1930, and the next day's *Brisbane Courier* reported Mayor William Jolly's words: "This majestic building will stand for all time, not only as a symbol of civic pride and enterprise of the present generation but as a monument to the work of the early pioneers. It is fitting that, on an occasion such as this, we should pause to pay homage to the memory of that noble band of men and women who laid the foundations upon which the superstructure of the city's present importance has been built ... they were faced with the task of transforming a wilderness into a civilisation."

The *Courier* said the building "was a testimony to the great resources of our state ... it was practically the whole of it constructed of Queensland material.

The granite for the base was procured from quarries at Enoggera, the beautiful freestone from Helidon, the cement was manufactured at Darra and the choice joinery work was all of Queensland timber."

City Hall was Brisbane's tallest structure for 40 years, until the rise of the Westpac building on Queen St in 1970 and then the

SGIO (now Suncorp) building on the corner of Albert and Turbot Sts.

The opening of City Hall came when Brisbane was a different place with different tastes.

On the same page as the *Courier*'s 1930 report on the opening of City Hall, the paper carried another report about greyhound racing with live hares as the bait at the Brisbane Cricket Ground (the Gabba).

Police raided the venue on the basis that the 11 bookmakers were betting at an unlicensed racecourse.

"Police officers entered the (betting) ring and commenced to take the names of the bookmakers," the paper told readers.

"By the time three names had been taken, the remainder of the fielders had vanished ... The management informed the police that they were under the impression that the licence granted for pony racing many years ago was still in existence.

The bookmakers suddenly re-appeared and recommenced operations."

THE DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT INFRASTRUCTURE SPEND IN BRISBANE'S HISTORY

Grantlee Kieza will speak about his best-seller *Mrs Kelly* as part of the Brisbane Writers Festival at the Indooroopilly Library on Thursday night and the State Library next Sunday.
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