

# **Old Museum Building conservation management plan**

Peter Marquis-Kyle



**1**  
A postcard of the museum.  
[Author's collection].

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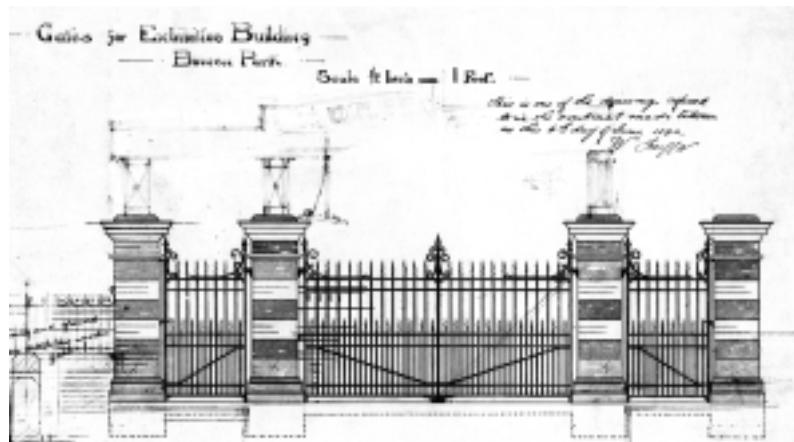
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Contract drawing of the iron gates and brick gate posts for the Exhibition Building by the architect G H M Addison, 1892. Addison sold this and other drawings of the building to the Works Department when the Queensland government took over the building in 1899. A preliminary sketch for a sign across the gateway can be seen.



## **Foreword**

*This landmark building on the major northern approach to Brisbane has provided a venue for cultural activities in Queensland for over one hundred years. Constructed as an exhibition building for the National Agricultural and Industrial Association of Queensland, the building and associated grounds accommodated Queensland's earliest International Exhibition in 1897 as well as the Association's annual show (the Ekka). In addition to the large exhibition hall, the building was constructed with a separate concert hall to provide a continuing income to the Association.*

*Despite this provision, the Association was financially overextended and the economic depression of the 1890s saw the building transferred to the Queensland Government. Under Government ownership, the concert hall continued to be the major venue in Brisbane for concerts and civic functions until the completion of the Brisbane City Hall in 1930. The exhibition hall, however, was immediately converted to house the Queensland Museum. The Museum reopened in 1901 and continued to occupy the building for 86 years before relocating to the Queensland Cultural Centre in South Brisbane. After 1930, the concert hall was converted to accommodate the Queensland Art Gallery. After 44 years, the Art Gallery also moved to South Brisbane. The Old Museum building has since been used by a large number of community arts and performance groups, many dedicated to developing the interests and skills of young Queenslanders.*

*The architectural design and location of the Old Museum building, as well as its rich history of exhibitions and other cultural activities, make this a special place for Queenslanders. A setting of landscape and strolling gardens also contributes to the cultural significance of the Old Museum. The wide recognition of these qualities has led to the inclusion of the Old Museum building on the Register of the National Estate and the list of the National Trust of Queensland, as well as on the Queensland Heritage Register.*

*To guide the development and use of the Old Museum Building, the Department of Public Works first commissioned a conservation study for the building in 1989. To understand the changes to the place and its circumstances since that time, the Department of Public Works has now commissioned a review of the study and preparation of a new conservation plan.*

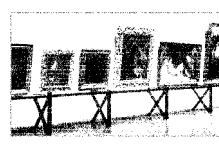
*The adoption of this conservation plan in 2000 will enable the future development and use of the Old Museum and its grounds to retain the special qualities of the place. In particular, the conservation plan will assist the Queensland Government to address the financial and management challenges inherent in the continuing public enjoyment of this major building.*

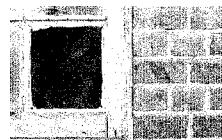
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Schwarten".

Robert Schwarten MP

Minister for Public Works and  
Minister for Housing

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*The basement*  
*The exterior of the building*  
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## Introduction

This report concerns a building erected for the Queensland National Agricultural and Industrial Association in 1891, and taken over by the Queensland government a few years later.

The building and its parts have been known by various names at various times; these are the most commonly used names with their approximate dates:

Exhibition Building (1891-1900)  
Exhibition Concert Hall (1891-1930)  
Queensland Museum (1901-1987)  
Queensland Art Gallery (1930-1970)  
Old Museum Building (the current name)

The Queensland Museum occupied the building from 1901 until 1987, and the building is still most strongly connected with that institution in people's memory. The Queensland Youth Orchestra is now the main tenant, along with other musical and cultural groups.

The Old Museum Building has long been recognised as an important element of Queensland's architectural and social heritage. This report's purpose is to explore and explain the building's cultural heritage significance, and recommend policies to protect that significance.

### Related documents

This conservation management plan is founded on a series of previous reports and investigations commissioned or prepared by the Department of Public Works and its predecessor agencies. I will list the main ones here, in date order:

- 1989 *Conservation of the Old Museum Building: 1: pre-design report*, Department of Works - a preliminary proposal to adapt the building for use by various performing arts companies.
- 1989 *Old Museum Building: conservation study*, by Peter Marquis-Kyle of Allom Lovell Marquis-Kyle Pty Ltd and Fiona Gardiner, for the Department of Works - a study of cultural significance, with tentative proposals for conservation.
- 1990 *Old Museum Building: conservation project: catalogue of documents*, Allom Lovell Marquis-Kyle Pty Ltd, for the Department of Administrative Services - a printed version of a computer database of documents pertaining to the building and held by the State Archives and the Department of Administrative Services.



- 1990 *Old Museum Building: conservation project: condition of the fabric*, Allom Lovell Marquis-Kyle Pty Ltd, for the Department of Administrative Services - a summary report of the findings of a systematic inspection and recording of the condition of the building fabric. It covers the interior and exterior of the 1891 building and its later additions, as well as fences and outbuildings.
- 1990 *Old Museum Building: conservation project: developed design report: exterior conservation*, Allom Lovell Marquis-Kyle Pty Ltd, for the Department of Administrative Services - a report proposing works to conserve the exterior fabric.
- 1996 *Old Queensland Museum: concert hall refurbishment: pre-design study*, Project Services - a proposal for (mostly internal) adaptation works.
- 1998 *Old Museum Gardens: conservation study*, Project Services with Catherine Brouwer - a report on historical development of the grounds and their cultural significance, with conservation recommendations.

## Authorship

This conservation management plan was written by me, Peter Marquis-Kyle. It incorporates large parts of the 1989 *conservation study* that I wrote with Fiona Gardiner (with help from Margaret Lawrence-Drew, Rachel Doherty, Catherine Brouwer and Gillian Alfredson).

## Acknowledgments

I am pleased to acknowledge the help of these people in the preparation of this document:

Keith van Eyk, Alberto Vides and Michael Longley, of the Portfolio Planning Branch, Department of Public Works

Col Clapper, Principal Project Advisor, Office of the Director-General, Department of Public Works

Stephen Murray, Built Environment Research Unit, Department of Public Works

Bernie Lewis, Venue Manager at the Old Museum Building

Glenn Cooke, Curator at the Queensland Art Gallery, for arranging for me to see the Addison rendering of an earlier design for the building (illustration 9, on page 10)

Catherine Brouwer, Landscape Architect, who helped to harmonise the findings of this report and her *Old Museum Gardens: conservation study*

The people who came to a workshop about the draft report in March 2000 - Alberto Vides, Michael Longley, Col Clapper, Stephen Murray and Catherine Brouwer (all acknowledged above); Selwyn Clark, Stuart Grierson, Stephen Coutts and Darren MacKenzie (Department of Public Works); Jinx Miles (National Trust of Queensland); John Mundy (Royal



National Association); Jason Woodhouse (Environmental Protection Agency); and Fiona Gardiner (Premier's Department).

### **Arrangement of this document**

This report is set out in these six chapters:

*Introduction* – this chapter.

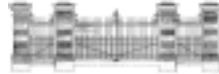
*The history of the building* – an historical account of the building, its site, and the institutions it has housed.

*What is important about the Old Museum* – an analysis of cultural heritage significance.

*The fabric* – a summary of the present physical condition of the building.

*Conservation* – how to take care of, and use, the building and its grounds.

*Appendix* – various collections of supplementary information, including notes (starting on page 85) keyed to superscript numbers throughout the text, and an index (page 79).



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Works Department drawing of new wrought iron signs, put up when the concert hall was converted for use by the Queensland Art Gallery, 1930.

