

History Bytes

THE BURNETT TRAFFIC BRIDGE

Designed by one of Queensland's most important early engineers - Alfred Barton Brady - the Burnett Traffic Bridge had been lobbied for by Bundaberg delegates since 1872.

Even though the Gillen Brothers had commenced a regular ferry service in November 1873, a petition was sent a year earlier to the government for a traffic bridge, followed by another in 1879, and a personal plea by J.C. Walker in 1885. Five years later, the Government began construction of a bridge across the Burnett River - just not the one Bundaberg was asking for. The Burnett River Railway Bridge was opened in 1891, and by then plans were well and truly underway for a traffic bridge across the Burnett. Early suggestions for the bridge name were Steuart Bridge - after brother John and Gavin Steuart, or Watson Bridge - after the man granted the first deed of land in Bundaberg in 1872.

With an early estimated cost of £51,000, (£27,500 from parliament and the balance a 40 year loan to the Bundaberg Municipal Council and Gooburrum Divisional Board), the bridge contract was awarded to McCormack & Son. Alfred Barton Brady's design was a larger version of his earlier Kennedy Bridge (1878), which was itself similar to the Victoria Bridge in Brisbane built in 1897.

Construction of the Burnett Traffic Bridge began in 1897 while the Kennedy Bridge was still being built across Saltwater Creek. The larger Burnett Bridge was designed with 51.8 m long hog-backed lattice trusses and eight spans, making it the longest steel traffic bridge in Australia when it opened on August 24, 1900. The bridge was officially opened by Queensland Governor Lord Lamington, with the opening at 11:30am followed by a banquet for invited guests. A public holiday was declared, and the toll of a penny waived for the day. The contentious bridge toll was eventually abolished in 1913.

The *Bundaberg Mail and Burnett Advertiser* on August 27, 1900 estimated the final cost of the bridge was £200,000.

Sue Gammon
 Bundaberg Library

References

Nolan, Janette. 1978. *Bundaberg: history & people*. UQ Press, St Lucia.
 O'Connor, Colin. 1985. *Spanning Two Centuries: Historic Bridges of Australia*. UQ Press, St Lucia.
100 Years of News. 2000. Bundaberg Newspaper Company, Bundaberg.



ca1898 - Construction of the bridge underway.
bun01069



ca1900 - The bridge nears completion.
bun01086



July 1900 - The bridge is finally finished.
bun01080

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