

# LONGREACH POWER STATION CEREMONY REPORT

## ***Powering the West***

### ***Engineering Heritage Marker Awarded to the Longreach Power House.***

On a crisp late-Autumn morning in Longreach, Queensland on 17 May 2013, some 60 guests gathered to witness Her Excellency, Ms. Penelope Wensley AC, the Governor of Queensland, unveil the award of an Engineering Heritage Marker at the Longreach Power Station. This Award, the 169<sup>th</sup> in the Australia-wide Engineering Heritage Recognition Programme, was made in respect of the Power Station's role in supplying mains power to Longreach and nearby towns and rural consumers in the central west of Queensland, from its commissioning in 1921, until 1985 when the area was connected to the State Electricity grid.

The original generating plant was powered by two Ruston and Hornsby gas engines, the gas being produced by charcoal gas producers with the charcoal obtained from firewood. As firewood became scarce, two Australian designed and built coal-fired gas producers were installed in 1951, the coal being supplied from Blair Athol.



*The Coal-fired gas producers*

Subsequent generating equipment installed at the station included a National dual-fuel engine in 1957, Crossley-Premier gas engines in and after 1960, and, in 1973, an English Electric diesel.



*The machine hall at the power station*

After a Welcome to Country from local Indigenous Leader Mr Tony Weldon, guests were welcomed to the ceremony by Mr Andrew Barnes, chair of Engineering Heritage Queensland who spoke about the Engineering Heritage Recognition Programme and foreshadowed future sites in the State which would be nominated for recognition.

The Governor in her address pointed out the central location in the State of the town of Longreach, and its iconic tourist attractions of the Stockmans' Hall of Fame, the Qantas Founders Museum, and the nearby Workers Heritage Centre in Barcaldine and the importance to the residents of this rural area of reliable reticulated mains electric power. She was very complimentary about the role Engineering Heritage Queensland is playing in researching and documenting sites such as this for their engineering heritage worth.



*Her Excellency, Ms Penelope Wensley AC addresses the gathering*

INSERT HERE A LINK TO THE GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS WHEN IT IS AVAILABLE ON HER WEBSITE.

Her Excellency and Ms. Rae Bowden, the Deputy Mayor of the Longreach Regional Council then unveiled the Interpretation Panel which will be installed at the entry to the museum after the ceremony.



*Her Excellency and Ms. Bowden unveil the Interpretation Panel, watched by Mr Simon Orton, Queensland Division of Engineers Australia President.*

After the unveiling, Cr Bowden spoke about the importance of the museum to the town and the district.

Engineer John Fordham, an Engineering Heritage Queensland member who was involved in the power station's operations and who carried out the research for the Award and the ceremony, spoke about the station and its history.



*John Fordham addresses the gathering.*

INSERT HERE A LINK TO JOHN'S TALK WHICH I AM SENDING AS A SEPARATE EMAIL ATTACHMENT

The gathering was then addressed by Mr Vincent Corbin OAM, currently CEO of the Boulia Shire, and formerly CEO of Longreach Shire Council.



*Mr Corbin addresses the gathering*

Mr Corbin spoke about how he was involved in arranging for the Council to buy back the power station from the demolition contractor in 1989 for \$450. A heritage grant of \$74 000 obtained soon after was the kick-start needed to commence the establishment of what today is an extensive local history museum complex. Mr Corbin also paid tribute to retired school teacher Mr Gary Deakin, who, with the local Lions Club, had been involved with the museum since its early days.

Concluding the ceremony, Andrew Barnes thanked the Council as owner of the power station for its agreement to accepting the Award, and for its assistance in arranging the ceremony and providing the morning tea for the guests. He also thanked Ergon Energy for its overall assistance and contributing to the cost of the Interpretation Panel.

INSERT HERE A LINK TO THE INTERPRETATION PANEL, FORWARDED AS AN ATTACHMENT TO ANOTHER EMAIL

After the official photographs, Her Excellency was conducted on a tour of the power station by John Fordham and the Council's museum officer Donna Rowlands

Prominent among the guests attending the ceremony were Cr. Norma Rae Bowden, Deputy Mayor of the Longreach Regional Council, several Councillors and staff of the Council, Ms. Joan Maloney, a former Longreach Shire Mayor, Mr Vincent Corbin OAM, CEO of Boulia Shire and past-CEO of Longreach Shire and who was closely involved in saving the power station from scrapping, and Engineers Australia officers Mr Simon Orton, Queensland President, Mr Andrew Barnes, chair of Engineering Heritage Queensland, Mr John Fordham, Engineering Heritage Queensland member who was involved in the power station's operations and who researched its history for the Award and the ceremony, Mr Stuart Bourne, Chair of the EA Local Group and Mr Brian McGrath, PSM, Engineering Heritage Queensland member and Queensland representative on the Engineering Heritage Australia Board.

BL McGrath, PSM