

## History of the Hornibrook Highway bridge

The Hornibrook Highway was opened on 4 October 1935.

The Hornibrook Highway bridge operated as a toll bridge and provided a crucial connection between Sandgate and Redcliffe. It was constructed and operated by MR Hornibrook Ltd in a 40-year franchise arrangement granted by the Queensland Government. It was surrendered to the Department of Main Roads in 1975 at the end of the franchise period.

The bridge was closed to traffic in 1979 following the opening of the parallel Houghton Highway bridge. Since then, the Hornibrook Highway bridge has been used for fishing, walking and cycling.

### Interesting facts

- » The entry portals were originally used as toll collecting booths, and incorporated a night safe and strong room for the money collected.
  - » Communication between the portals was by telephone, with the telephone wires located inside one of the tubular handrails.
  - » A total of 19000 tonnes of materials were used in the construction of the bridge, including 144 tonnes of galvanised nuts, bolts and spikes.
  - » The bridge consists of 1752 timber girders, supported by a concrete sub-structure
- The original tolls were:
- 1 shilling for cars and utes (10 cents)
  - 6 pence for motorcycles (5 cents)
  - 3 pence for pedestrians and cyclists.

### MR Hornibrook

Manuel Hornibrook, founder of MR Hornibrook Ltd, was also responsible for the construction of a number of other bridges in Queensland. These include Victoria Bridge, William Jolly Bridge, Breakfast Creek Bridge, Logan River Bridge and Story Bridge (in a joint venture with Evans Deakin and Company Pty Ltd).

MR Hornibrook Ltd built over 100 bridges in Australia, New Guinea and New Zealand. They also constructed the Sydney Opera House.

### Current state of the bridge

The Hornibrook Highway bridge has deteriorated severely. The concrete sub-structure is now in a poor condition. Recent tests on the ironbark girders revealed that half the girders are in a poor state and nearly a quarter in critical condition. State-of-the-art technology in ground penetrating radar was used along with load testing, drilling and visual inspection.

The condition of the bridge is understandable given it has well exceeded its expected design life and is located in a harsh marine environment.

Hardwood materials, as used in the original construction, would be required to keep the bridge open and safe in the long term. Replacement timbers would need to come from trees more than 100 years old to be a suitable size to support the bridge. This would not be environmentally sustainable or economically viable.

### Future of the Hornibrook Highway bridge

Main Roads is undertaking monitoring and maintenance activities to keep the Hornibrook Highway bridge open and safe until the new Houghton Highway bridge, with its pedestrian and cycle path and new fishing platform, opens.

These activities include:

- » strengthening the girders
- » treating termites
- » repairing and fencing off some sections of the deck.

Once the new Houghton Highway bridge is built, the Hornibrook Highway bridge will be demolished, although part of the bridge will be reconstructed at its northern end for recreational and fishing purposes. The historic entry portals will also be retained and refurbished.

### Feedback and enquiries

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