



fact sheet

history of south bank site

The site where South Bank stands today was originally a meeting, hunting and gathering place for local indigenous people.

In the early 1840s, the area established itself as the business hub of the young city of Brisbane.

From the early 1900s until 1984, the area was a port and an industrial hub and by mid-1980, it had become a run down area.

Its history demonstrated a poor use of prime riverfront land in a fast-growing city.

In 1984, the site was chosen as the location for World Expo 88.

The selection of the site for the staging of Expo 88 proved an inspired one and was the prime catalyst for the creation of South Bank and the emergence of Brisbane as a vibrant, significant Australian city.

Expo 88 ran over six months from 30 April to 30 October 1988. By any measure, Expo 88 was judged one of the most successful in the history of international expositions, welcoming visitors from across the globe and firmly planting Brisbane on the world stage.

The theme was “Leisure in the Age of Technology” and it was the largest event of the 1988 Bicentennial celebrations of the European settlement of Australia. It attracted more than 18 million visits (more than double the predicted 7.8 million), including staff and VIPs, and was considered a turning point in the history of Brisbane. Expo 88 attracted some 80 pavilions, of which 36 were from international-level governments.

The people of Brisbane wanted to keep the site as their own after Expo 88 and so an international competition was held to provide a plan that didn't just involve commercial return as the primary consideration.

South Bank is regarded as the most successful re-development of a former Expo site in the world.

Twenty years ago, the South Bank site was a degraded, industrial stretch of the Brisbane River.

Today, South Bank has been transformed into Brisbane's premier lifestyle, recreational, celebratory and cultural Precinct. A renowned destination, it has won awards for its urban renewal in Australia and internationally.