

**Ceremony Report**  
**for the presentation by Engineers Australia**  
**to the Queensland Parliament**  
**of the citation awarded to**  
**Edward Gustavus Campbell Barton**  
**2024 Engineers Australia Queensland**  
**Hall of Fame recipient.**

## **1. The Invitation**



The Honourable Pat Weir MP, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly  
invites you to attend  
a presentation by Engineers Australia to the Queensland Parliament  
of the citation awarded to  
Edward Gustavus Campbell Barton  
2024 Engineers Australia QLD Hall of Fame recipient.

28 October 2025

1pm - 1:45pm

Bernays Room - Parliament House  
Refreshments provided

Parliament House is located on the corner of George and Alice Street.  
Entry is via the Parliamentary Annexe on Alice Street.  
Upon entry, guests move through security screening  
before signing the guest register and showing Photographic ID.  
Carparking is limited at Parliament House and must be pre-booked.  
Carparks can also be located at QUT campus, a short walking distance.

RSVP by 21 October  
via email to [office.ofthespeaker@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:office.ofthespeaker@parliament.qld.gov.au)  
including any dietary requirements

## **2. Background**

Engineers Australia Queensland Division sought to honour Edward Gustavus Campbell Barton (1858–1942), recognised as the “father” of Queensland’s electric supply industry, by placing his 2024 Queensland Engineering Hall of Fame citation within Parliament House.

Barton, as Queensland Government Electrical Engineer in 1886, commissioned the first government power station, installed underground Edison Tubes, and introduced electric lighting to Parliament House. After resigning, he founded the firm Barton and White Co. in 1888, the first company to provide electricity supply to the public in Queensland. This evolved into Brisbane Electric Supply Company, City Electric Light Co., Southern Electric Authority of Queensland and ultimately Energex which we have today.

Barton also advanced electrical trade training, established engineering associations, served as the first president of both the Queensland Electrical Association and Queensland Institute of Engineers, and as an MLA, promoted the creation of the University of Queensland with engineering as a founding faculty.

Parliament House already holds Edison Tube samples presented in 1992 and 2018, reinforcing the appropriateness of displaying Barton's citation publicly to commemorate his seminal contributions to Queensland's development.

### **3. The Ceremony**

Some 20 invited guests attended the presentation of the Citation to the Speaker of Queensland Parliament, Honourable Pat Weir MP on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2025 at Parliament House.

### **4. Presentations**

**Darren Beattie,**

General Manager Engineers Australia, Queensland

Good afternoon everyone

I too would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we gather today—the Turrbal and Jagera peoples—and recognise their enduring connection to land, waters, skies, and community. We honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the world's oldest continuing cultures and our first engineers, and we pay our respects to Elders past and present.

I would also like to acknowledge...

- **The Honourable Pat Weir MP**, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland
- **Neil Laurie**, Clerk of the Parliament (*may be late*)
- **Michael Ries**, Deputy Clerk of the Parliament
- **Directors of the Parliament**

On behalf of Engineers Australia we thank you for hosting us for the Engineers Australia Queensland Engineering Hall of Fame presentation, honouring our 2024 posthumous inductee, **Mr Edward Gustavus Campbell BARTON**.

This award is called for annually under the auspices of the Queensland Honours & Awards committee, and we also have with us today **Dick Wharton** the Chair of the Hall of Fame sub-committee.

This nomination was made possible through the research of **Emeritus Professor Sydney Arthur Prentice AO 1908-2002**, who was a long standing member of the

Engineering Heritage Panel, as it was then known, of Engineers Australia. Prof Prentice published a book called ***Edward Barton 1858-1942: pioneer electrical engineer*** which was instrumental in shaping this recognition. Prof Prentice himself was inducted into the Engineering Queensland Hall of Fame in 2010.

I mention this as today we have Prof Prentice's daughter Margaret with us.

Mr Barton is recognised as the ***Father of Queensland's electric supply industry***.

We present this citation to QLD Parliament in recognition of his significant ties to government – serving as QLD Government Engineer in 1886, and later as a member of the QLD Legislative Assembly in 1908.

We would typically present the recognition to the inductee's family, but despite extensive efforts, we were unable to locate any relatives. Given his strong ties to the Queensland Government and his connection to the Edison Tubes, which were showcased here in 2018, it felt entirely fitting for us to be here today.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the dedication of the Engineering Heritage QLD committee, whose tireless work ensures our engineering legacy – and its pioneers – are preserved for future generations.

I now invite **Brian Becconsall** to read the citation for Mr Edward Gustavus Campbell Barton.

**B.J. Becconsall**

EHQ Committee

Speech at presentation Ceremony to Speaker of Queensland Parliament for Qld Engineers Hall of Fame 2024 Inductee E.G.C Barton

Hon Pat Weir MP Speaker, Directors and Staff of Parliament, Engineers Australia Representatives

A special welcome also to Ms Margaret Prentice, daughter of the late Prof. Syd Prentice who did most of the research on Barton, and Mr Jim Simmers, retired engineer from the Electricity Supply System in Qld and a long-time researcher for Engineers Heritage Queensland.

I'll set the scene in the early 1880's in Brisbane. New incandescent electric lighting had just been developed in the USA by Thomas Edison and in England by Joseph Swan, and was being installed in private installation in Brisbane, including the Govt Printery in 1883.

The Liberal Government of Sir Samuel Griffith liked what they saw and decided that Parliament House needed also this new "cool" electric light to reduce the excessive heat and odours generated by all their gas lamps. They entered into a contract for a new power station next to the printery and for underground mains down William St to Parliament, all wiring and fitting of 500 lights installation, mostly all supplied by Edison companies

It took to 1886 after many technical problems to finally commission the whole scheme after a new brilliant electrical engineer, Mr EGC Barton was appointed as

Government Electrician, and to commission, test and run the whole supply system. Instead of arriving hot and sweaty by horse carriages to work in buildings with hot and smelly gas lights, they could cool off with this new Electric Lighting

So, who was this new accomplished Electrical Engineer EGC Barton?

Edward Gustavus Campbell BARTON

1858 – 1942

Inducted in 2024

Edward Gustavus Campbell BARTON pioneering electrical engineer, and acknowledged “father” of the Electric Supply Industry in Queensland, was born in Melbourne in 1858, and attended school in Dunedin New Zealand. He studied engineering at Karlsruhe Polytechnic in Germany from 1875- 1879 after which he obtained practical training in England and Scotland. In 1882, he superintended the world’s first public electric lighting installation in Godalming, Surrey, England as Siemens Brothers representative before returning to New Zealand. From 1882 to 1886, he was a consultant engineer in Australia and New Zealand, and in 1886, he was appointed Government Electrical Engineer for Queensland to immediately commission the first Government Power Station at the old Printery in William St. Brisbane, to supply new lighting in the Government Printery and Parliament House. This also included commissioning the first underground electric mains in Australia along William St to Parliament House using “Edison Tubes,” and the first electric lighting network in Parliament to replace the hot gas lighting.

In 1888, Barton resigned from this position and formed with C.F. White the firm of Barton & White, whose initial main work was the manufacture of small electrical equipment. In this year, the firm offered to supply the public with electric light from their first power station in Edison Lane off Creek St. Brisbane, the General Post Office being their first customer. Progress in extending supply was slow due to the well-established gas supply industry, floods, equipment failure and general suspicion to this new form of energy. By 1896, the firm was liquidated and reformed as the Brisbane Electric Supply Co. Ltd., and in 1898, needing more space for growth, the plant was moved to a new station at Ann St. In 1904, the company became a market/shareholder company, the City Electric Light Co. (CEL) with Barton as the first General Manager and a Director. Several years later he resigned as GM and was appointed a consultant as the industry grew on a sound basis throughout Brisbane. In 1915, during WW1, he moved to England joining the staff of the Dept. of Munitions, and later the Naval Information Service, partly on account of his fluency in French, German, and Italian.

Throughout his 30+ years in Brisbane, he contributed a considerable variety of technical papers to learned societies, including electric railways and wireless telegraphy. He conducted classes in electrical subjects starting from 1882 under the Brisbane School of Arts before a full Technical College was created in 1892, and continued lecturing, giving tutorials and supervising laboratory classes up until 1904. An eloquent speaker and widely travelled, he was elected to the Council of the Queensland Institute of Mechanical Engineers, and in 1898 he helped form the Queensland Electrical Association and was president from 1899-1900. When the

Queensland Institute of Engineers was formed in 1901, Barton was the first president for 1901-1902, and the honorary Queensland secretary of the UK based IEE. He was a founding member of the IE Aust. in 1919, a member of the Royal Society of Queensland, the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, the British Decimal Association, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society of London and of Australasia. In 1905, he became the President of the Council of the Brisbane Technical College. Barton showed an interest in Politics and in 1908 was elected as Queensland MLA for Nth Brisbane, actively promoting the establishment of a university, but did not seek re-election. He was appointed to the first University of Queensland Senate in 1910, ensuring Engineering becoming one of the first 3 faculties established in 1911. From 1915, he effectively lived in England but travelled widely with frequent visits to Australia and New Zealand. He died in 1942 in Watford, England.

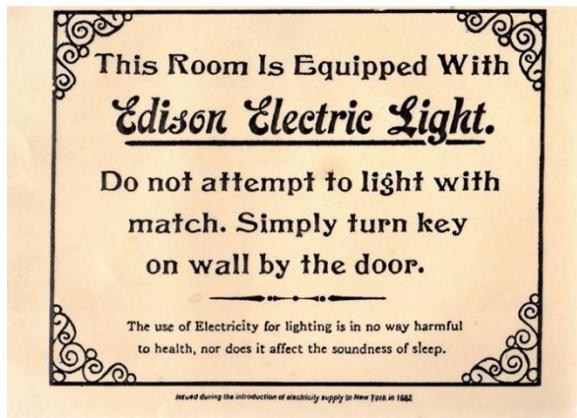
## 5. Photographs



**Speaker of the House Honourable Pat Weir MP receives the Citation from Darren Beattie and Brian Beconnalls**



**Brian Beconnalls presenting to the Speaker the notice posted at Parliament House with instructions on how to use the newly installed electric lights.**



The notice first used in 1882



**With the Citation  
and the Edison Tube samples**  
**L-R**  
**Brian Beconnalls**  
**Darren Beattie**  
**Hon Pat Weir MP**  
**Neil Laurie**



**Engineers Australia Queensland  
Members celebrate the recognition  
given to  
Edward Gustavus Campbell  
BARTON.**

More photos are available [here](#)

**The End**