

Paronella Park

Hydro-Electric Scheme



CEREMONY REPORT

on the presentation of an

ENGINEERING HERITAGE MARKER

on 26 July 2025

at Paronella Park

Mena Creek QLD

Prepared by
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Engineering Heritage Queensland

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1. Introduction

Some 36 invited guests attended a ceremony on the 26th July 2025 at Paronella Park, Mena Creek, North Queensland to unveil a marker and interpretation panel, awarding an Engineering Heritage Marker to the Paronella Park Hydro Electric Scheme.

The ceremony was organised by Paronella Park Owners, Mark and Judy Evans and Engineers Australia, Queensland Division. Representatives from these organisations, the Mayor of Cassowary Coast Regional Council, representatives from the council and invited guests attended.

2. Invitation



Dear xxxx

**VIP Invitation: Paronella Park Engineering Heritage Marker ceremony
for the Hydro-Electric Scheme**

It is our pleasure to invite you as our guest to attend the unveiling of the engineering heritage marker awarded to the Paronella Park hydro-electric scheme.

The hydro-electric scheme is an example of outstanding vision to use overseas hydro technology for the first time in Queensland in 1933, winning awards for green powered tourism and achieved Tourism Hall of Fame status. In 2022, it won the Traveller's Choice Award for the top 10% worldwide attractions, and is listed in the Queensland State Heritage Register.

On Saturday 26 July, an unveiling ceremony will be held on the grounds of Paronella Park, with formalities from 1.30pm-2.30pm.

Full Event program:

12.30pm Lunch in the Park – catering provided (optional)

1.30pm Heritage presentation and unveiling ceremony

2.00pm'ish Tour of the hydro-electric generator room

2.30pm Guests may depart (There are further festivities planned if you wished to stay longer, please ask for full details)

Please RSVP to Hinu Komene, Stakeholder Engagement Manager on 07 3226 3014 or qld@engineersaustralia.org.au by Friday 27 June. We look forward to your response.

Kind regards

Darren Beattie
General Manager Queensland

Judy Evans
Paronella Park

Engineers Australia promotes sustainability – think before you print.

3. Program

Full Program

Time	Description	Remarks
12:00 – 12:30	Arrive Paronella Park	
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch in the park	Café on the deck or Picnic (PP generously providing lunch)
13:30 – 14:15	Engineering Heritage Recognition ceremony	Formal proceedings
14:15 – 15:00?	Tours of the Hydroelectric generation plant (generator room)	PP lead, EA and guests
15:00 – 15:30	Day Experience tour	PP lead, EA and guests
15:30	Self-guided Botanical Walk	EA and guests
TBD (~45 mins)	Darkness Falls tour	PP lead, EA and guests

Engineering Heritage Recognition Ceremony - Detailed

Time	Duration	Description	Who	Speech about/Further detail
12:30	1 hr	Lunch in the park – Café on the deck or picnic	OPTIONAL	Paronella Park are generously providing lunch
13:25		<i>Guests to be seated</i>	<i>Riley/PP staff</i>	
13:30	2 min	Welcome	Host - Darren Beattie GM QLD Engineers Australia	Acknowledgement of Country. Welcome special guests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mayor Teresa Millwood Councillor Jeff Baines Councillor Renee McLeod Councillor Ellen Jessop Councillor Chris Littlemore Tim Hogan, GM Engineering & major works, CleanCo
13:32	5 mins	Official opening of event	Mayor Teresa Millwood	Acknowledging the heritage award, and noting Paronella Park's significance to the region.
		<i>MC</i>	<i>Host – Darren Beattie</i>	<i>Thank you and pass to Allan Churchward</i>
13:37	7 mins	Speech	Allan Churchward EHQ	Background and significance of the Engineering Heritage Recognition Program, and the Engineering Heritage Marker awarded to PP
		<i>MC</i>	<i>Host – Darren Beattie</i>	Thank you and pass to Mark Evans
13:44	10 mins	Speech	Mark Evans Paronella Park	BRIEF history of the park, providing some detail on the hydroelectric generation scheme
		MC	<i>Host – Darren Beattie</i>	Thank you Mark. I'd now like to call upon the Mayor to officially unveil the engineering heritage marker then the interpretation panel.
13:54	6 mins	Unveiling of the IP & marker + PHOTOS	Mayor Teresa Millwood QLD President EHQ Rep - Allan Churchward Judy & Mark	Official unveiling Photos – see Photo Schedule below
14:00	10 mins	Photographs – VIPs/PP/EHQ	Riley directing + Photographer	Photos – see Photo Schedule below

14:10		Ceremony closing remarks	Host - Darren Beattie	This ends the formalities for the day and we thank everyone who made it here. I understand there is a continuing casual program for the day and you're more than welcome to stay and take part in the site tour.
14:12		Handover for park tour	Paronella Park Guide	Mark – safety briefing A large group were given a guided tour of the Park
14:15		Tour of the Generator Room	Mark Evans	Tour of the Hydroelectric generation plant (generator room) Small groups to be taken down the very steep steps to the generator room where Mark explains the details of the plant.
14:15		FORMALITIES END		Guests may depart Attendees enjoy their own time.

4. Interpretation Panel and Marker

The Interpretation Panel is located adjacent to the steps leading down to the generator room. The standard EHA frame was not used in this case owing to the difficulty with installing and the cost.



Unveiling the Interpretation Panel (L to R)
 Andrew Reid, EA QLD President
 Darren Beattie, EA QLD GM
 Peter Webb, EHQ Cairns Regional Group
 Rod McDonald, EA Mechanical College
 Teresa Millwood, Mayor Cassowary Council



The EA Marker (which was located opposite the Interpretation Panel at the time).



Unveiling the Marker (L-R) Allan Churchward, Judy Evans, Mark Evans, Teresa Millwood

5. Photographs.



Mayor Teresa Millwood addressing the guests and recognising the Evans family and the work done in preserving this truly amazing piece of historical architecture and the outstanding achievement in receiving the Engineering Heritage Marker from Engineers Australia.



Allan Churchward from EHQ explaining the Engineering Heritage Recognition Program and the importance of recognising such engineering achievements as the Paronella Park Hydro Scheme.



Mark Evans outlining the technical aspects and the challenges of maintaining and running the hydro scheme.



Mark and Judy Evans (Paronella Park owners).
With Members of the EA Cairns Committee (L-R)
Mark Evans, Drew Jardine, Nastassja Regan (Chair), Nick Hubbard, Louis McKenna, Peter Webb, Sonia Holzheimer, Mitchell Tap, Judy Evans, Kianoush Emami.



In the distance Mark Evans and Peter Webb highlight the entrance to the generator room.



A close up

Official photos taken on the day can be found [here](#)

6. Media Items

1) Engineers Australia /News and Media 20 August 2025.



[Home](#) / [News and media](#) / Local park awarded engineering heritage marker for hydroelectric scheme

An unveiling ceremony was held in Cairns to present Paronella Park's hydroelectric scheme with an Engineering Heritage Marker Award. Built in 1933–34 by Spanish immigrant José Paronella as a public garden and entertainment venue, the park has captivated visitors for generations with its impressive architecture and engineering excellence.

Inspired by the small hydroelectric schemes in his homeland, Spain, Paronella saw the potential of using Mena Falls to generate electricity. The park's hydroelectric system channels water from a weir above the falls through a 27-metre pipe, dropping 9.3 metres to a power station where it drives a 15 kW turbine. This represents the earliest application of river water hydroelectric technology in Queensland. While the system has undergone several upgrades over the years, it still relies on the original water turbine to this day.

"Paronella's creation of Queensland's first hydroelectric scheme was not only a technical triumph but a visionary leap that brought sustainable energy to a remote part of the state long before such concepts were mainstream", said Andrew Reid, Engineers Australia Queensland President.

"His legacy is a powerful reminder of how innovation, resilience and a deep commitment to community can shape history."

“Paronella’s creation of Queensland’s first hydroelectric scheme was not only a technical triumph but a visionary leap that brought sustainable energy to a remote part of the state long before such concepts were mainstream”.

Mark and Judy Evans, the current owner-operators, purchased the park in 1993 with a vision to restore its prominence. Viewing Paronella Park as a work of art, they have focused on careful maintenance and preservation rather than reconstruction.

Mayor Teresa Millwood attended the ceremony to show her support for the Evans family, stating “The Evans family have been maintaining and preserving this truly amazing piece of historical architecture and to see this now receive an Engineering Heritage Maker is truly an outstanding achievement.”



The award, which is bestowed by Engineering Heritage Australia as part of its Engineering Heritage Recognition Program aims to publicly celebrate, promote and preserve Australia's significant engineering and industrial heritage.

“Recognising the historical significance of achievements like this is vital, not just to preserve the physical infrastructure, but to honour the stories and people behind them,” said Mr Reid. “The dedication of the Engineering Heritage Queensland committee in securing this recognition is truly commendable.”

Over the years, the park has become a local staple, hosting moving picture shows every weekend, social gatherings and special events – all illuminated by night lighting powered entirely by Paronella’s own private hydroelectric scheme. The award highlights Paronella Park as a rare convergence of history and engineering ingenuity, celebrating its contribution to Queensland’s engineering and cultural heritage landscape.

2) Regional News

None available.

6. Acknowledgements

Engineers Australia wishes to acknowledge the work of Rod McDonald (of the Mechanical College), Brian Becconnsall, Bryan Cheetham and Peter Webb (of EHQ) who undertook the research and drafted the Proposal, the successful Nomination and the design of the Interpretation Panel and Hinu Komene EA Qld for the organising of the ceremony and liaison with Paronella Park.

Engineers Australia also acknowledges the important contribution and support from the Owners of Paronella Park, Mark and Judy Evans and their staff for the ceremony and looking after the guests with a tour of the park.

THE END