

Story Bridge Restoration

PRESERVING A NATIONAL ICON

Committee Report – May 2025



Story Bridge: A national icon

The Story Bridge is one of the most iconic and recognisable landmarks in Brisbane and Queensland. It provides a key inner city cross river connection and plays a vital role in the transport network, while also enhancing the city's character with its unique design and historical significance.

The Story Bridge is indispensable to the broader South East Queensland region, with 42.5 per cent of trips originating from outside of Brisbane.

Built 85 years ago, the bridge is reaching the end of its design life. Despite regular maintenance, the Story Bridge is in need of a major restoration to extend its operational life. To this end, the Story Bridge Restoration Committee was established in October 2024 to develop a roadmap to restore the Australian icon and map out potential funding strategies.

Advice from the Restoration Committee points to a sustained investment over the next 15 years to fully restore the Story Bridge in time for its 100th birthday in 2040. This sustained investment will ensure the icon continues to serve the nation for another century.

The works required to give the Story Bridge another century of life is beyond the means of local government.

This report provides the background and context to the bridge, its history and upkeep, the challenges it faces on the path to restoration and what needs to be done to preserve this significant structure of both regional and national importance.



42.5% of bridge users come from outside of Brisbane



The Story Bridge is 85 years old and reaching the end of its design life



Over 100,000 vehicles use the Story Bridge every day



The bridge typically carries up to 4,000 active transport users per day



Without sufficient support from all 3 levels of government, alternative funding models like tolls will need to be considered

Preserving a legacy ahead of its centenary

The Story Bridge is approaching its 100th birthday — a milestone that few structures of its size and scale reach while still serving as a vital link in the nation's transport network.

If key restoration works are not progressed in the coming years, with support from all levels of government, further restrictions on public transport, freight and private vehicles will be unavoidable.



Story Bridge: A snapshot



Locally owned, nationally utilised

People come from both near and far to cross the bridge, with 42.5% of users starting their journey outside of Brisbane, including 15% travelling to or from national highways.



Critical transport link

The bridge provides a critical link across the Brisbane River carrying over 100,000 vehicles per day as well as providing a link for typically up to 4,000 daily active trips across the river.



City landmark

The bridge is an instantly recognisable landmark in Brisbane’s skyline, often appearing in promotional materials, postcards and advertisements.



Events and celebrations

The bridge is often lit up with different colours to mark various occasions, festivals and events, enhancing its role as a focal point for the city. It also plays a landmark role in events such as Riverfire.



Cultural significance and identity

Now at 85 years old, the bridge is deeply ingrained in Brisbane’s culture and history as a symbol of the city and is included on the Queensland Heritage Register.



Tourism attraction

Many points of interest are located around the bridge, such as Howard Smith Wharves. Many visitors also come to experience the Story Bridge Adventure Climb, taking in views of the city from its summit.

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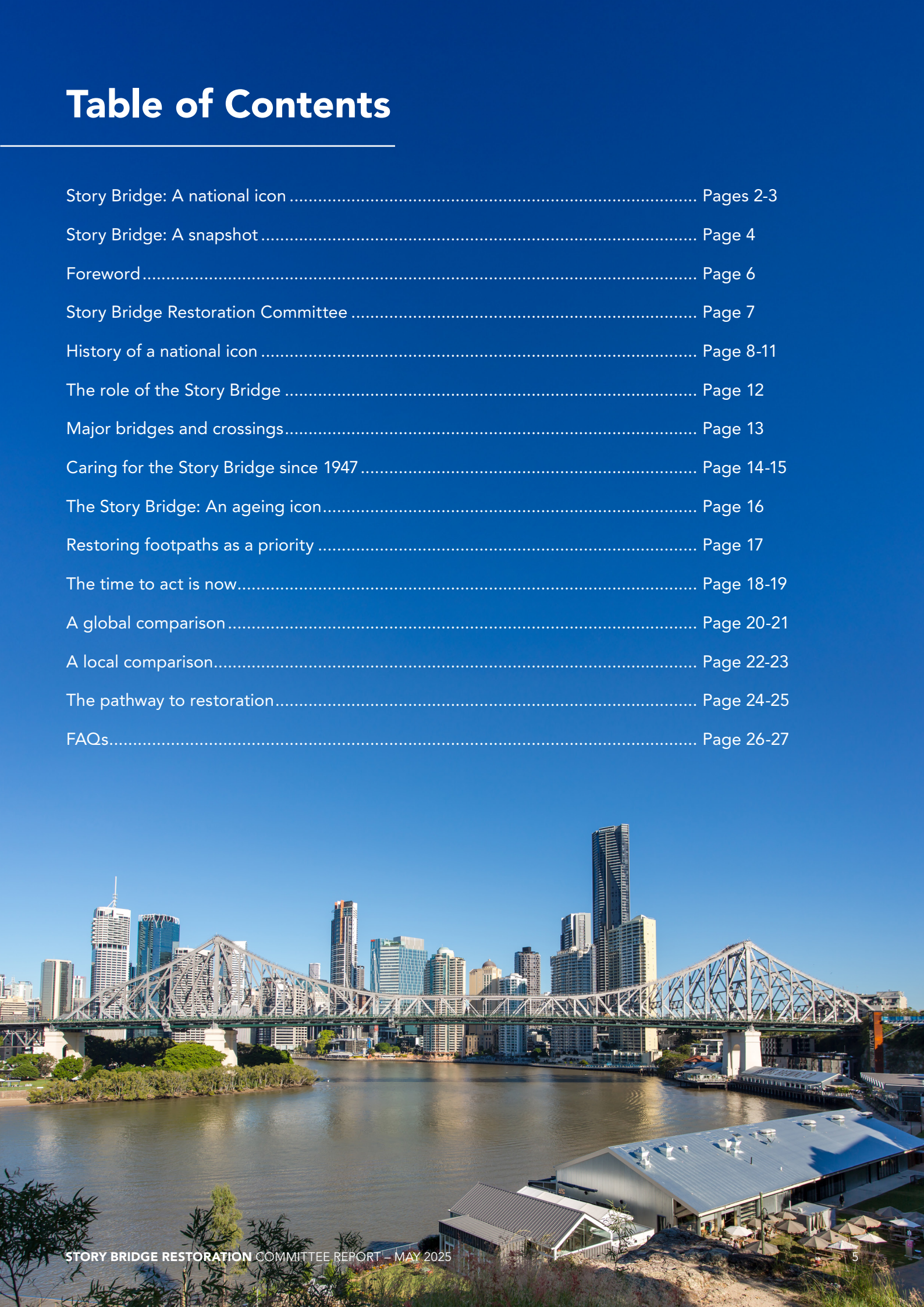
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Foreword

The Story Bridge must be preserved.

It is the defining icon of the city’s skyline, and as one of Australia’s most recognisable landmarks, it provides a critical link in South East Queensland’s transport network.

However, the Story Bridge requires immediate and significant attention.

I am privileged to have been asked to chair the Story Bridge Restoration Committee, drawing on the knowledge and vast experience of infrastructure experts in bridge engineering, asset management and major project financing and delivery.

The Story Bridge was built by the Queensland Government in the 1930s, and despite regular maintenance and renewal work since Brisbane City Council took stewardship of the bridge, it was not designed to cater for the types and volumes of vehicles which use the bridge every day. Now 85 years old and rapidly approaching the end of its design life, significant investment is needed to restore the iconic structure, ensuring it remains safe, operational and celebrated for another century beyond its 100th birthday in 2040.

Since convening in late 2024, the Restoration Committee has researched the history of the Story Bridge, extensively reviewed previous work completed and studied other relevant bridge structures around the world. We have also toured the bridge itself and spoken with Council teams who maintain the bridge.

This report summarises the strategic role of the bridge in the region’s transport network and highlights the challenges the bridge is facing and why a full restoration of the bridge is needed over the next 15 years. Without significant investment, bridge users would be severely restricted in using the bridge in the coming years, and ultimately, by 2045 the Story Bridge may need to be closed permanently.

The need for a full restoration of the Story Bridge should come as no surprise. There are several iconic bridges around the world that are similar in age, size and scale, which have all undergone restorations of various scopes since their construction.

This report is only the first step. We have reaffirmed the need to complete a detailed business case to not only validate the scope of the restoration, but to also present funding options and confirm the optimal delivery program for the restoration.

There is no doubt preserving the Story Bridge will come at a significant cost, a cost which cannot be managed by Council alone. Given the bridge’s strategic role extends well beyond local borders, all 3 levels of government must work together to preserve the national icon. Without financial support from the Queensland and Australian governments, alternative funding options will need to be considered including tolls or introducing a special rates levy for Brisbane’s ratepayers.

I want to thank the Restoration Committee members for their efforts in preparing this report, as well as the Council staff who provided information and advice to inform this work.

Restoring the Story Bridge will be challenging, particularly when it comes to securing funding and the necessary resources to ensure critical restoration works can be delivered in the coming years. The Restoration Committee will continue to support Council and its funding partners to oversee this critical project to ensure the bridge’s safety, functionality, and enduring legacy is preserved for future generations.



Nigel Chamier AM

Story Bridge Restoration Committee

The Story Bridge Restoration Committee was formally assembled by Lord Mayor Adrian Schrinner in October 2024 to develop a roadmap to restore the Australian icon. The Committee includes independent advisors with expertise in heritage infrastructure, asset management and finance, including contributions to works on the Sydney Harbour Bridge.



Nigel Chamier AM
(Committee Chair)

Nigel has specialist skills in property and major infrastructure projects, with decades experience as a Chair and Company Director, including as Director of Queensland Airports Limited, Director of South Bank Corporation and Chair of the highly acclaimed \$215 million restoration of Brisbane City Hall.

Nigel is a Retired Fellow of The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, The Australian Property Institute and a Graduate and Fellow of The Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Peter Burnton
(Committee Member)

Peter has overseen bridge and civil structural projects at Arup across Australia, New Zealand and Singapore in a technical leadership capacity, and is also an Adjunct Professor in the School of Civil Engineering at The University of Queensland.

Peter played a key role in designing the marine infrastructure at Howard Smith Wharves, the New Farm Riverwalk replacement, and contributed significantly to the design and delivery of numerous active transport bridges spanning the Brisbane River.



John Hardwick
(Committee Member)

John is a renowned senior public servant in Transport for New South Wales (TfNSW). He currently serves as the Executive Director for Asset Management, where he is accountable for transport service outcomes across the \$211 billion TfNSW asset portfolio, including the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Along with his public service roles, he has also served on numerous boards, including Austroads and World Partners in Asset Management.



Graham McHugh
(Committee Member)

Graham is a highly accomplished Chartered Accountant with extensive business expertise gained through senior executive roles in Australia and abroad. His diverse background includes working across various industries, with a particular focus on asset construction and maintenance, health and safety management, major project financing, as well as debt refinancing and restructuring.

History of a national icon

The Story Bridge was built 85 years ago during the Great Depression to connect Brisbane's northern and southern suburbs and provide local employment opportunities. It was designed by Dr John Bradfield, who also designed the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and was named after public servant John Douglas Story.

Commissioned by the Queensland Government in 1933, the Story Bridge was constructed by Evans Deakin and Hornibrook Constructions¹.

The Story Bridge was placed on the Queensland Heritage Register in 1992, recognising its significant place in the State's history and identity.

Originally a toll bridge

The Story Bridge opened as a toll bridge on 6 July 1940 to a crowd of 37,000 people, which was about 10% of Brisbane's population at the time.

Tolls were sixpence (5 cents) per passenger vehicle, twice the cost of the Sunday Mail newspaper at the time. Other charges ranged from onepence for a bicycle to 1 shilling and sixpence (15 cents) for heavy vehicles. The toll was abolished when the bridge was transferred to Council in 1947.



Construction facts

Construction took place between **1935** and **1940**

The original build was budgeted to cost approximately **£1.6 million**

The Story Bridge is the longest steel cantilever bridge in Australia at **1,072 metres in length**

The bridge has **12** steel spans made up of **11,800** tonnes of structural steel and **2 million** rivets

The bridge has **21** concrete spans made up of **38,000** cubic metres of concrete

Almost **400** people worked on the bridge during peak construction

95% of construction materials were made in Australia

89% of the cost of construction was expended in Queensland



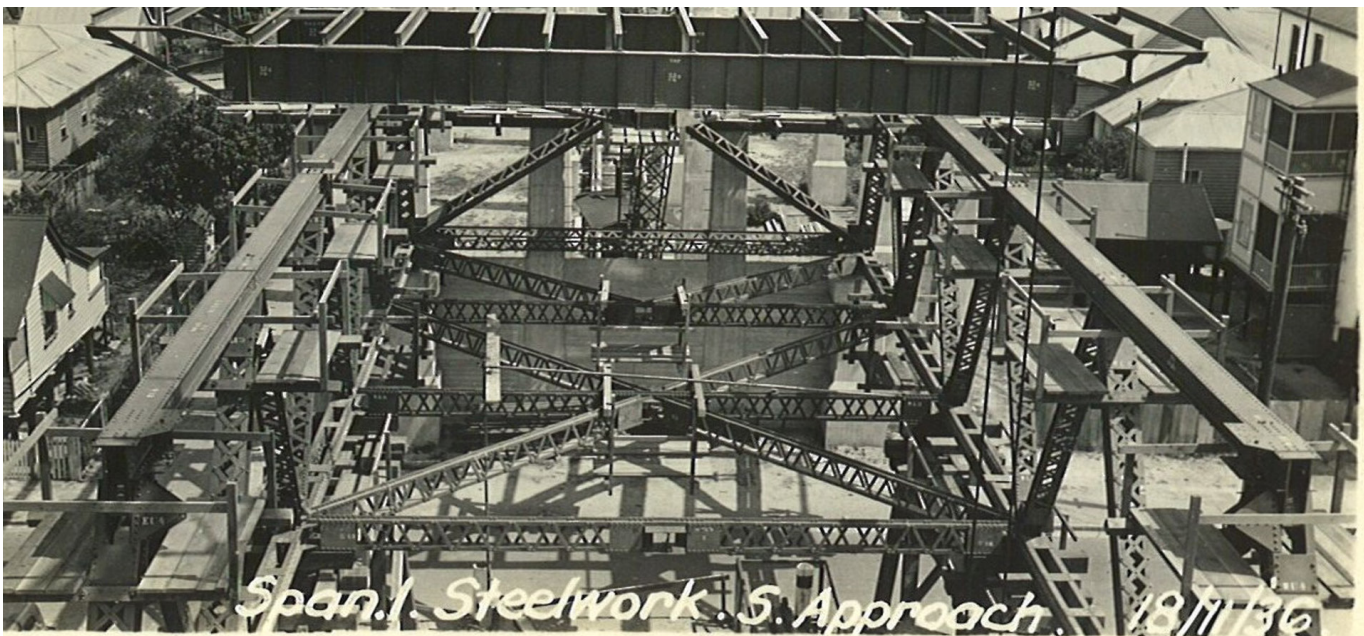
Concreting works on the Story Bridge – 1936



Maintenance on the Story Bridge – 1984



The Story Bridge – 28 July 1938



Installation of steel framework – 18 November 1936



¹: <https://www.engineersaustralia.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2021-11/QLD-Story-Bridge-Flyer.pdf>
<https://www.slg.qld.gov.au/discover/exhibitions/hornibrook/story-bridge/story-bridge-essay-julie-hornibrook>
<https://apps.des.qld.gov.au/heritage-register/detail/?id=600240>

History of a national icon



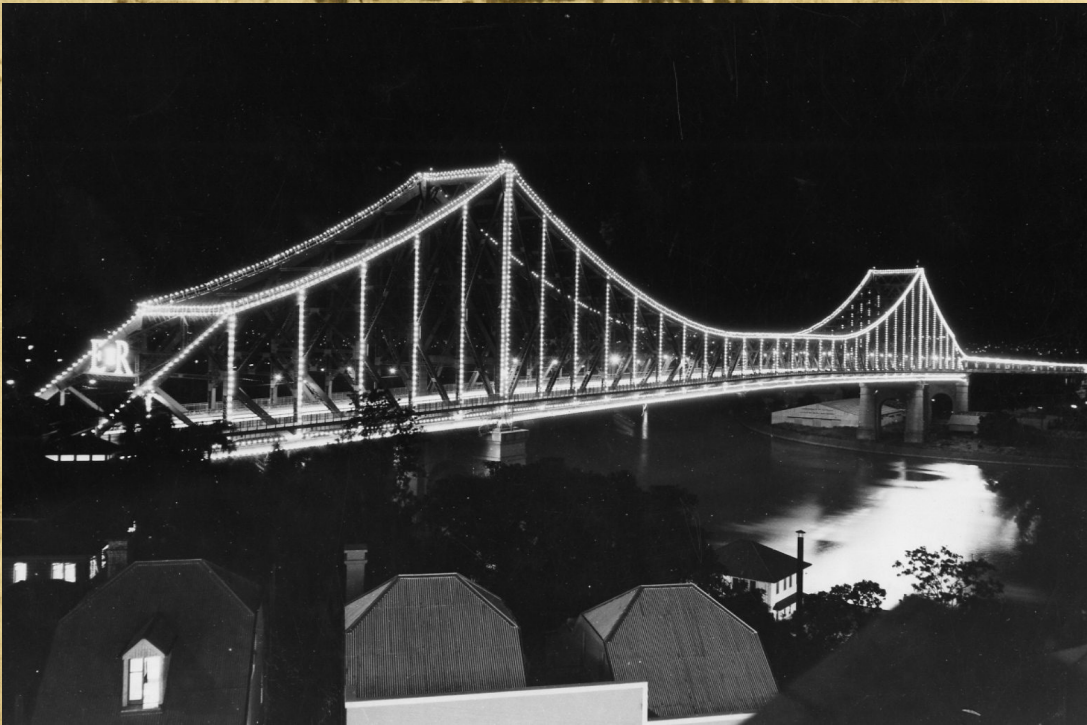
Story Bridge design sketch – 1934



View of the Story Bridge from the City Botanic Gardens – 1969



Aerial view of the Story Bridge from over the City Botanic Gardens – 1962



The Story Bridge lit up for the Royal Visit of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip – 1954



View of the Story Bridge from Charlotte Street – 1947

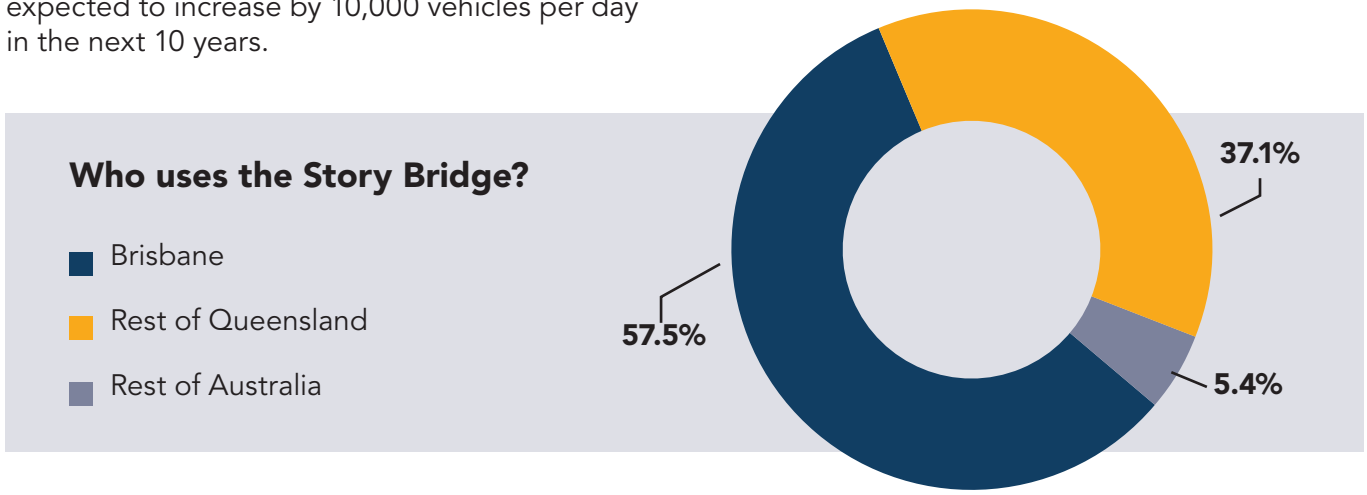
The role of the Story Bridge

The Story Bridge plays a critical role in Brisbane’s transport network, linking the city’s north from Fortitude Valley to the south at Kangaroo Point. However, it is not only Brisbane residents that use the Story Bridge, with 42.5 per cent of Story Bridge crossings made by vehicles from other parts of Queensland and broader Australia.

The Story Bridge carries over 100,000 vehicles every day, the third highest daily volume of vehicles of any of the city’s river crossings. It is responsible for 43 percent of daily non-tolled inner city vehicle river crossings, with traffic expected to increase by 10,000 vehicles per day in the next 10 years.

The bridge also typically carries up to 4,000 daily active transport trips, and links with the Kangaroo Point Bikeway to the south, and the CBD and New Farm Riverwalk to the north.

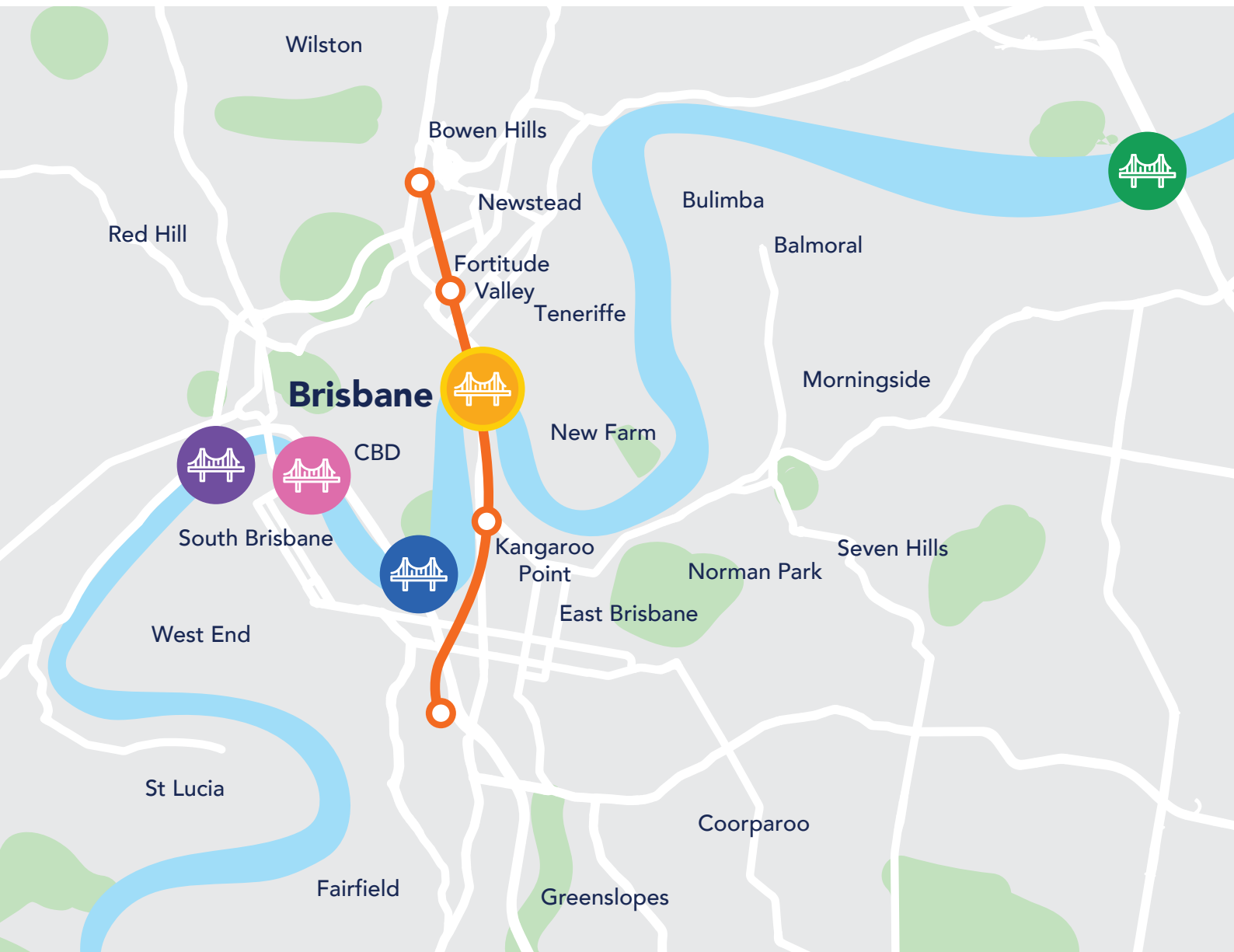
In addition to the bridge structure itself, the Story Bridge supports other facilities including a maintenance depot. Council also manages a commercial arrangement with Story Bridge Adventure Climb to allow members of the public to enjoy panoramic views of Brisbane from the top of the bridge.



The Story Bridge plays a major role as the centrepiece for renowned Brisbane events including Riverfire and is regularly lit up with different colours to mark various occasions, festivals and events, enhancing its role as a focal point for the city.

Riverfire fireworks display on the Story Bridge

Major bridges and crossings



Bridge	Daily vehicles	Capacity
Story Bridge	100,000+	<div></div>
Captain Cook Bridge	110,000+	<div></div>
Gateway Bridge (toll)	130,000+	<div></div>
William Jolly Bridge	25,000+	<div></div>
Go Between Bridge (toll)	10,000+	<div></div>
Clem 7 (toll)	32,000+	<div></div>

If we do not act now to restore the Story Bridge, traffic will divert to other bridges and major crossings, increasing congestion on Brisbane’s road network and reliance on toll roads.

Caring for the Story Bridge since 1947

Built in the mid-1930s during the Great Depression, the Story Bridge was constructed at a time when immediate need and cost-saving measures were prioritised over long-term durability. As a result, the bridge did not anticipate a 100-year lifespan. Yet at 85, as it approaches the end of its design life, the Story Bridge remains one of Australia’s most iconic and heavily used river crossings.

Brisbane City Council has been solely responsible for the maintenance of the Story Bridge since it was transferred to Council from the State Government in 1947. Council took over half of the total debt of the bridge (£750,000, equivalent to approximately \$73 million in 2025 dollars). All tolls on the bridge were abolished in 1947 and Council paid all interest and redemption until the debt on the bridge was cleared in 1989.

Since taking stewardship of the bridge, Council has established a dedicated depot to manage the upkeep and maintenance of the bridge. This includes significant work on 7 of the bridge’s southern approach spans, not including the bridge’s 3 main spans over the Brisbane River.



Story Bridge painting

The annual maintenance budget in 1947 was £4,500 (approximately \$363,000 in 2025 dollars), which has since increased to an annual expenditure of \$3 million.

Since 2019 alone, Council has spent close to \$80 million to restore the bridge and prolong its life, including stripping back the old paint, applying new protective coatings to steel and extensive concrete and steel repairs.

Regardless of regular maintenance and ongoing repair works over many decades, the bridge has naturally aged and is now reaching the limits of what maintenance alone can achieve. A major intervention is now essential to ensure its safety, functionality and longevity for future generations, and to preserve its role as a vital link in Brisbane’s transport network.



Steel frame of the Story Bridge

Council’s stewardship over the years

Ongoing maintenance since 1947 includes:

- Concrete repairs
- Painting
- Cleaning
- Annual wash-down
- Graffiti removal

In addition to the \$3 million spent on maintenance annually, over the last 20 years Council has solely funded more than \$120 million in bridge improvements and repairs.

- 1992-1995 Replacement and repair of sections of footpath
- 1994 Major road resurfacing
- 2002 Concrete footpath resurfacing
- 2008 Road resurfacing
- 2011-present Concrete repairs program
- 2011-2013 Upgrade of roadway and footpath lighting and decorative lighting
- 2014 Major road resurfacing
- 2015 Installation of safety barriers
- 2017 Concrete footpath resurfacing
- 2018 Waterproofing and road resurfacing
- 2019-present New steel coatings and extensive concrete and steel repairs
- 2019-2024 Paint restoration spans 1 to 7
- 2023 Light pole refurbishment
- 2024 Refurbishment of bearings in spans 4 to 7
- 2024 Strengthening of trusses in spans 5 to 6



Story Bridge maintenance activity



Story Bridge painting

Recent works undertaken on the steel spans of the bridge revealed various complexities that were previously unknown, confirming the need for a full restoration of the Story Bridge.



Story Bridge maintenance activity

The Story Bridge: An ageing icon

Based on its current condition, the bridge’s structure will continue to worsen and within approximately 20 years, the bridge cannot remain in safe operation for most users.

The Story Bridge was not designed to cater for the volumes of traffic and size of vehicles it currently carries. Heavy haulage vehicles have created fatigue and overstress for the structure of the bridge. Council is already restricting heavy vehicles to the inner lanes of the bridge. While this has slowed deterioration, the bridge’s structure remains susceptible to further decline.

There is significant existing corrosion across the bridge structure, with some elements in urgent need of attention.

Based on the current condition of the bridge, Council has classified the Story Bridge as an ‘at risk’ asset.

Without urgent intervention, the bridge’s structural integrity will continue to deteriorate, resulting in the following potential risks:

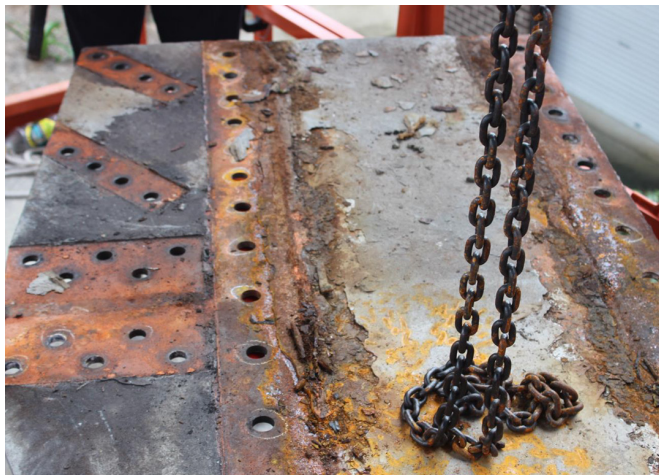
- continued reduction in traffic loads
- operational restrictions, impacting its effectiveness as a key transport link
- reduced viability of tourism and commercial activities associated with the bridge. Any forced reduction in traffic loads on the Story Bridge would likely divert more vehicles on to other inner city river crossings, in particular the Captain Cook Bridge and William Jolly Bridge, causing significant congestion and increased pressure on key routes.



Box gantry rail bolt corrosion



Box gantry rail bolt corrosion



Gusset plate corrosion



3-Way plate corrosion and pitting

Restoring footpaths as a priority

The Story Bridge includes 2 separate footpath structures, one on each side of the bridge. The footpaths have been deteriorating over time and have limited life span left.

A number of Council assets across Brisbane were closed in March 2025 in preparation for Tropical Cyclone Alfred to prioritise public safety, including the 85-year-old Story Bridge footpaths.

Due to the age of the Story Bridge footpaths, a structural assessment was required prior to reopening.

Assessments undertaken after the cyclone revealed the footpaths have deteriorated at an accelerated pace.

The paths will remain closed while potential temporary and long-term replacement solutions are investigated.

To mitigate potential safety issues, Brisbane City Council is fast-tracking the installation of protective netting to contain concrete spalling.



Footpath deterioration



Sample concrete and reinforcement



Water damage and concrete deterioration

The time to act is now



What happens if we do nothing

WE
ARE
HERE

2025 Footpaths close

Footpaths closed due to assessments after Tropical Cyclone Alfred showing they have deteriorated at an accelerated pace. This marked the first major access restriction on the bridge.



2032 Restrictions during 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games

Given anticipated increased usage, the Story Bridge capacity would need to be restricted during the Games.



2040 Vehicle and tourism restrictions during the Story Bridge centenary

Private vehicles and tourism activity will be restricted on the bridge.



2035 Public transport and freight restrictions

Buses and freight have been limited to the inner 4 lanes of the bridge since 2022. By 2035, buses and freight will need to be completely removed from the bridge.

100

The Story Bridge 100-year anniversary



2045 Bridge closed

Within 20 years, the bridge can no longer be used safely and could permanently close, requiring a costly and difficult demolition.

A global comparison

There are several bridges around the world that are similar in age, size and scale to the Story Bridge. Much like the Story Bridge, these bridges are iconic landmarks and provide critical links in their city’s transport networks. These bridges have undergone restorations of various scopes since their construction, funded by either multiple levels of government or by state governments or equivalents.

The major works have been listed here to provide global context on bridge preservation and maintenance. The case studies are based on publicly available information, noting additional investments may have been made.

The estimated cost to restore the Story Bridge is significant. These case studies highlight the extensive funding required to manage major maintenance activity through to the cost of bridge replacement.

Furthermore, it is expected the Story Bridge Restoration will be programmed over a longer period to minimise operational impacts, and the cost estimate needs to account for how long the works will take and the escalation of costs in the construction industry.



Sydney Harbour Bridge

Sydney, Australia

The Sydney Harbour Bridge **opened in 1932** and carries vehicles, heavy rail, active transport users and pedestrian traffic. Tolls are in place for all southbound traffic.

In 2025, the NSW Government committed an annual budget of **\$40 million** to maintain the bridge. During the late 2000s to mid 2010s, the NSW Government spent **\$85 million** on structural maintenance alone.

Tappan Zee Bridge

New York, USA

The Tappan Zee Bridge **opened in 1955** to vehicular traffic and closed in 2017. The bridge was refurbished in the 2000s at a cost of \$150 million USD (or **\$315 million AUD** today), which was funded by the New York Department of Transportation.

A replacement bridge was built and opened in 2017. The cost to replace the bridge was \$3.9 billion USD, or approximately **\$5.9 billion AUD**, and was delivered by the New York State Thruway Authority through a Public Private Partnership funding model.



Golden Gate Bridge

San Francisco, USA

The Golden Gate Bridge **opened in 1937** to vehicles, active transport and pedestrian traffic. A tolling system is in place for all southbound traffic. A seismic retrofit took place between the late 1990s and late 2000s in response to risks associated with major earthquake activity at a cost of \$189 million USD, which is approximately **\$417 million AUD** in 2025 dollars.

A final phase of seismic retrofit works, due to commence this year, is estimated to cost more than \$1 billion USD (approximately **\$1.5 billion AUD**). These works are co-funded by US federal, state and regional bodies.



Jacques Cartier Bridge

Quebec, Canada

The Jacques Cartier Bridge **opened in 1930**, with its 5 lanes carrying vehicular, active transport and pedestrian traffic. A deck reconstruction, funded by the Government of Canada, was undertaken in the mid 2000s costing \$127 million CAD, which is approximately **\$225 million AUD** today.

Another program of works including reinforcement, cleaning and painting was completed more recently, costing \$96 million CAD – approximately **\$118 million AUD** in 2025 dollars.



A local comparison

Detailed planning is underway for several new bridges and bridge upgrades in Brisbane and the South East Queensland region. The below bridge projects provide local context on the costs involved to upgrade or build new bridges in today’s infrastructure market.

Current industry-wide market conditions and an upcoming boom in infrastructure delivery across the region ahead of the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games is expected to result in significant cost increases to deliver infrastructure projects in the coming years.

Considering these cost pressures, in addition to costs involved with dismantling the existing Story Bridge, substantial land acquisition and significant community and traffic disruption, building a new bridge would likely amount to several billion dollars.

Replacing the bridge with a new structure is also not supported due to its cultural and heritage significance for Brisbane. A full restoration of the iconic structure is the only option.

Centenary Bridge

Brisbane, Australia

The original Centenary Bridge **opened in 1964** carrying 2 lanes of traffic. A second bridge was built alongside it which opened in 1987, creating a 4-lane highway.

Construction is now underway on the Centenary Bridge Upgrade, delivering a new 3 lane northbound bridge and rehabilitating the existing bridges to 3 lanes southbound with upgraded active transport facilities.

The **\$298.5 million** project is jointly funded by the Queensland and Australian Government.



Bribie Island Bridge

Bribie Island, Australia

The Bribie Island Bridge **opened in 1963** consisting of 2 traffic lanes and a narrow pedestrian pathway. It was a toll bridge until 1975.

The Queensland Government has completed a business case for the construction of a new bridge to Bribie Island, featuring 2 eastbound traffic lanes and a dedicated active transport path. The project would also include upgrades to the bridge approaches and key adjacent intersections.

Approximately 30,000 vehicles cross the existing bridge daily, with the new Bribie Island Bridge project expected to cost **more than \$700 million**.



The pathway to restoration

The Committee’s assessments have highlighted the critical need to address the Story Bridge’s ageing structure, given its critical and indispensable role in Brisbane’s transport network.

Taking no action is not a viable option, as the bridge’s continued deterioration would require escalating maintenance costs to ensure safety. Over time, this could lead to the bridge becoming a hazard, where the structure poses a threat to its surroundings – a scenario that would result in the loss of a key transport link and significant expense.

Replacing the bridge with a new structure is simply not feasible given its cultural and heritage significance for Brisbane, with construction of a new bridge expected to be much more expensive than restoring the icon and likely to cost several billion dollars.

It is the recommendation of the Committee that the Story Bridge restoration should be scoped, programmed and funded in a way as to ensure long-term fiscal benefits for Council’s maintenance program. An asset management plan should accompany the program which needs to outline a comprehensive and organised strategy for the ongoing management, maintenance and optimisation of the bridge.

Brisbane City Council has secured \$2.25 million in funding from the Australian Government to progress a detailed business case for the full restoration of the Story Bridge. The business case will confirm scope, staging and the cost of works to restore the bridge in time for its 100th birthday in 2040, ensuring it continues to serve the region for the century ahead.

The way forward

-
- Now**
 - Footpaths closed and investigations underway for temporary reinstatement and long-term solutions
 - Fast-tracking the installation of protective netting to contain concrete spalling
 - Next**
 - Business case for full restoration commences
 - Footpath repairs to be completed
 - Future**
 - Business case complete
 - Restoration funding committed
 - Restoration works commence

Urgent investment needed

The future of the Story Bridge depends on sustained investment from all levels of government to support its full restoration and ensure it continues to serve Brisbane, South East Queensland and the nation well into its second century. Now 85 years old, sections of the bridge are already reaching the end of their design life. With footpaths already closed, further restrictions on public transport, freight, and private vehicles are likely in the coming years, and by 2045 the Story Bridge may need to permanently close.

Funding opportunities

The scope of works required on the Story Bridge will be extensive and complex, with no alternative but to carry them out in full to avoid significant further deterioration and associated costs of inaction.

Restoring the Story Bridge will come at a very high cost. As an asset with significance that goes beyond local boundaries, the works required to give the icon another century of life can only be delivered through a funding partnership between all levels of government.

The Story Bridge Restoration Business Case should investigate a range of funding options which are not mutually exclusive, and may include:

- **Queensland and Australian government funding contributions** – Financial support from the Queensland and Australian governments is crucial, as Council will not be able to restore the Story Bridge alone. Along with financial support, political support is also crucial to the successful performance of restoration works. It is therefore recommended that financial support be sought from both the Premier and State and Federal Ministers responsible for transport and/or infrastructure portfolios.
- **User charges (tolling)** – Comparable bridges around Australia and globally charge users tolls, which in turn fund the upkeep and maintenance of the bridge. If funding support is not forthcoming from other avenues, Council may have no choice but to raise funds through user charging, subject to Queensland Government approval. The Restoration Committee believes consideration should be given to whether tolling users of the bridge is feasible and would raise enough funds.

- **Special rates levy** – While it is never desirable to increase the burden on ratepayers, the restoration of the Story Bridge, which plays such a significant part in Brisbane’s transport network and community life, is worthy of confronting this scenario. It is the opinion of the Restoration Committee that a voluntary Special Rates Levy similar to the one used for the restoration of City Hall could be considered.
- **Corporate sponsorships, donations and/or fundraising models** – Under this option, Council could consider other innovative fundraising options from corporate representatives. Potential options would need to be considered in greater detail in the context of current commercial arrangements for the bridge (e.g. Story Bridge Adventure Climb). The Restoration Committee recommends Council consider engagement with industry to gauge appetite and scale of potential fundraising under this option.

Across the globe, bridges similar to the Story Bridge in terms of age, size and scale have undergone major restorations at the expense of federal governments or through a partnership arrangement between all levels of government.

Restoring the Story Bridge ahead of its 100th birthday is an opportunity to preserve an iconic Australian landmark, protect a vital transport link and deliver long-term value through a staged, collaborative program of works.

The journey to its restoration will require support from a range of stakeholders across government, business and the community. The consequences of not restoring the Story Bridge will be severe and will have a lasting and material impact on the City of Brisbane and the broader South East Queensland region.

FAQs

Why does the Story Bridge need to be restored?

The Story Bridge is an ageing asset. While it has been well maintained, all ageing assets require restoration to prolong their operational lives.

Recent restoration work undertaken by Brisbane City Council revealed various complexities that were previously unknown. Further detailed analysis and condition assessments have determined that ongoing maintenance activities will not be enough and the Story Bridge requires major intervention and a full restoration to ensure it can continue serving South East Queensland for another 100 years.

Why is the restoration of the Story Bridge so expensive?

A full restoration would be costly as it would involve numerous facets of work across the bridge. Some works require innovation in terms of access and safety considerations, given the limited space available for plant and equipment. Much of the scope would focus on the bridge's main span, which would also require careful consideration due to the tidal river underneath.

Would the bridge be closed during restoration works?

The business case would confirm how the restoration works would be undertaken. Given the volume of daily traffic on the bridge, it is acknowledged that the impact of closures would be significant. In the past, Council has closed the bridge to undertake maintenance works at times least impactful to bridge users. As the scope and timing of the restoration program is confirmed, information would be shared regarding works and any closures that may be necessary.

Is the bridge safe?

The safety of the users of the bridge, as well as those who live or work in its vicinity, is of utmost importance. Council engineers undertake regular detailed inspections of the bridge and monitor its condition day to day. Detailed testing and assessments are also undertaken by external experts. If safety is ever at risk to those users, Council would take immediate and appropriate action to rectify this.

A recent example of this was Council's decision in March 2025 to close the footpaths to prioritise public safety in preparation for the expected 90 km/hr winds forecast for Tropical Cyclone Alfred. Assessments undertaken after the cyclone showed the paths have deteriorated at an accelerated pace. As a result, the paths will remain closed while potential temporary and long-term replacement solutions are investigated.

To mitigate potential safety issues, Brisbane City Council is fast-tracking the installation of protective netting to contain concrete spalling.

Can the bridge be dismantled and rebuilt?

No. As a heritage listed asset, the Story Bridge cannot be removed and rebuilt. Building a new bridge will be significantly disruptive to the inner suburbs of Brisbane. It is expected that constructing a new bridge would be far costlier than the preliminary estimates for restoring the current structure.

What is the difference between bridge maintenance and bridge restoration?

Bridge maintenance involves routine, preventative activities performed regularly to preserve a bridge structure and keep it in serviceable condition. Maintenance is typically less expensive and disruptive. It is scheduled based on regular inspection cycles with the goal of ensuring the bridge remains operational and meets its intended design life by addressing small issues before they become significant problems.

In contrast, bridge restoration involves more significant intervention to restore a bridge to its original condition or improve its functionality. It is much more extensive than regular bridge maintenance and involves major works including repairs, strengthening or even replacement of structural components to bring the structure back to a serviceable condition and extend its operational life. Restoration is typically much more expensive. It occurs when bridge structures are nearing the end of their design life and inspections reveal issues that cannot be addressed through routine maintenance.

Has Brisbane City Council appropriately maintained the bridge?

Yes, Brisbane City Council has been carrying out significant ongoing maintenance and repair works since taking stewardship of the Story Bridge in 1947. See pages 14 and 15 of this report for a detailed breakdown of these activities.

Why didn't restoration works start earlier?

In addition to ongoing maintenance activities, Brisbane City Council began restoration works in 2020 to repair and strengthen the bridge. Works included abrasive blasting of all coatings, new protective coating of steel and extensive concrete and steel repairs.

These works maintained the structural integrity and heritage of the iconic bridge while ensuring the local road network continued to be safe and accessible for everyone. However, the works and further engineering assessments revealed more comprehensive restoration works were required to extend the bridge's life for another 100 years. Brisbane City Council is now progressing a detailed business case for the full restoration of the Story Bridge. The business case will confirm scope, staging and the cost of works to restore the bridge in time for its 100th birthday in 2040, ensuring it continues to serve the region for the century ahead.



