



MEDIA RELEASE

7 October 2015

**Queens Park stone carving display unveils the faces behind
Treasury Casino & Hotel's multi-million dollar heritage conservation program**

An experienced Scottish stonemason and a young Ipswich apprentice are just some of the faces behind the conservation of Brisbane's oldest buildings, showcasing their craftsmanship and skills to hundreds of locals during a public stone carving display in Queens Park yesterday.

The demonstration was part of a seminar organised by the National Trust of Australia (Queensland), to reveal the traditional art of stonemasonry and provide an update on the multi-million dollar heritage conservation program for the two sandstone buildings housing Brisbane's Treasury Casino & Hotel.

Treasury Casino & Hotel, operated by Echo Entertainment Group, supported the seminar by hosting a scaffold tour of the Treasury building and the Queensland Heritage Masonry's stone carving display.

Queensland Heritage Masonry Director Vincent Mackenzie-Ross leads the small team behind the heritage conservation program and brings more than 38 years of stonemasonry experience from his work across heritage buildings, cemeteries, churches, monuments, and war memorials.

"With only a few heritage buildings in Brisbane, let alone Queensland, our industry is very tight-knit as there are only a small number of people in the state with the specific skills and knowledge to perform this type of meticulous work," Mr Mackenzie-Ross said.

"It generally takes six months to restore each building façade. We completed works on the Queen Street façade of the Treasury building, which houses the Treasury Casino, earlier this year. Current works are now occurring on the George Street side of the building and we will eventually move onto the Elizabeth Street facade.

"Over on the Lands building, home of the Treasury Hotel, we've completed three sides with the Stephen's Lane façade yet to commence. We also have the William Street side of the old State Library building to complete."

Forty year old Scottish stonemason Colin Taggart said learning his trade in his homeland gave him the solid grounding he needed to support Treasury Casino & Hotel's heritage conservation program.

"I moved to Australia from Edinburgh in 2007. Aside from working in different weather conditions, from the snow to the sun, the stonemasonry work required in both countries is very similar," Mr Taggart said.

"Having worked in this field for the past 24 years, a day in my job might involve cutting out rotten or broken stone, cutting new stone to insert back in, carrying out patching work and mortar repairs, repointing joints between stones, and general cleaning duties to remove algae from the stone."

Twenty-four year old Ipswich apprentice David Profke is now in the third year of his stonemasonry trade and enjoys knowing the practical work he does now will have an impact on the future.



“As a young person working in this field, I have a stronger appreciation of why we need to maintain these buildings – to keep an important part of Brisbane’s history alive for more people like me,” Mr Profke said.

National Trust of Australia (Queensland) Chief Executive Officer Jonathan Fisher said interest from the public in the preservation of heritage buildings had continued to grow each year.

“It was pleasing to see we sold out on the number of tickets available for the scaffold tour, and attracted many people at the stone carving display,” Mr Fisher said.

“This strongly indicates that people in Brisbane are becoming more interested in how we care for these buildings to continue promoting our rich heritage and our city’s development over the past 180 years.”

Echo Entertainment Group Managing Director Queensland Geoff Hogg said Queenslanders have a strong attachment to their heritage buildings and a strong desire to conserve them.

“Since taking stewardship of the two Treasury buildings 20 years ago, we have invested more than \$55 million to restore and repurpose them for public use and ensure they continue to be part of Brisbane’s fascinating history,” Mr Hogg said.

Echo Entertainment Group is part of the Destination Brisbane Consortium, which was selected as the preferred proponent for the Queensland Government’s Queen’s Wharf Brisbane precinct project.

The redevelopment area is state-owned land, located between the Brisbane River and George and Alice streets.

“Our proposal to redevelop Queen’s Wharf Brisbane is an opportunity to extend our existing heritage conservation and help repurpose the nine beautiful heritage properties and two parks within that district,” Mr Hogg said.

“Our vision is to activate the river front of our river city and reinvigorate the greatest collection of heritage buildings and places in Queensland.”

ENDS

Media contact: Naomi Jamieson, Echo Entertainment Group, naomi.jamieson@echoent.com.au, (07) 3306 8746