

CORONATION WEEK

By Noel West

The coronation of Queen Elizabeth II occurred on 2nd June 1953. Australia was very keen to celebrate the momentous event with Queensland (naturally) participating and particularly Brisbane. A Coronation Week was planned featuring numerous celebrations and events with many of the city's buildings, bridges and stores gaily decorated and illuminated, the likes of which had never been seen. The illuminations were switched on for the first time on Saturday night 30th May and an estimated 100,000 thronged into the city, similarly repeated for several nights. Another interesting way to view the illuminations was the provision of joy flights over the city. Such was their popularity that TAA flew two DC3s while ANA and QAL each flew one DC3. Fares were £1 for the twenty minute low level flights from Eagle Farm

Coronation Day, Tuesday 2nd June, was declared a public holiday and the Exhibition and Victoria Park were the venues for special events. Amongst other things the day featured a Roman Catholic Coronation Commemorative Mass at the Exhibition including 10,000 children. Following that a Military Review of 6500 service personnel, 21 armoured vehicles, 36 heavy guns, 21 gun salute, massed bands and an RAAF flyover was held in Victoria Park. In the evening a citizens' celebration was held at the Exhibition. As far as the provision of City Council public transport was concerned a summation of the event that appeared in the July 1953 issue of Electric Traction magazine is worth reproducing.



Car 535
Cavendish Rd -
It was the
Royal visit in
1954, and the
cars are at the
Cavendish Rd
terminus.
Photo by N F
Reed

Coronation Day in Brisbane saw very large crowds handled by the B.C.C. Transport Department without undue delay. The transport 'front line' was at the Museum Corner (Brunswick St., and Gregory Tce.) as an important religious gathering at the Exhibition Oval was closely followed by a Military Review in Victoria Park. Numerous special trams ran to Exhibition and to the Hospital crossover, and trolleybuses used for the first time the route Gardens-Hospital via Gregory Tce., using the recently built turning loop in front of the Medical School. (This route is not yet a regular working.)

Ald. W. C. Coutts (Chairman, Transport Committee) and Mr. S. L. Quinn (Gen. Manager) watched proceedings from the Museum Corner, where a small P.A. system was introduced to guide passengers. Its usefulness was restricted because the speaker did not broadcast destinations of approaching cars, difficult to discern when Brisbane cars are banked up. A large number of diesel buses left the vicinity for outer suburbs but most were poorly patronized (one was seen with 4 passengers) and caused congestion by right-turning into Gregory Tce. and by blocking intending tram passengers from their cars.

Trolley buses had better loads, but also did right turns and required a pointsman to work the overhead frog. Trams which had been stacked up in Barry Parade, Sutton St., and the north end of Gregory Tce., loaded crowds at the Museum end of the Exhibition Loop, and, with others reversing at the Hospital provided a continuous service, in many cases direct to suburban termini. An unusual sight was the use of a few Dreadnoughts on a public holiday.

Information for this article was sourced from contemporary issues of The Courier Mail and Electric Traction.



Queen Street
1950s Photo
from BTMS
Archive