River Street
2005

River Street was the early hub of the Mackay township. Everything and everyone depended on it. From 1863-1923 people and goods arrived and departed from this site, including immigrants, settlers, islanders, indentured workers and sugar. Mackay relied heavily on the river until 1939 brought the development of the harbour and better land links.

The buildings along River Street reflect the history of the port and city of Mackay, from early hotels, housing and warehouses to the development of the government and Catholic Church precincts and private enterprise. In 2005 the influences, activities and many of the buildings have changed. The waterfront precinct is not the vital hub of the city that it once was, and heavier traffic along the western section is impacting on access to the river. These are the challenges facing our city – how to manage development and not lose the personality, the stories and the sense of history. River St is an important part of our heritage.

National Trust of Queensland Mackay Branch

Compiled by Margaret Lane
Research by Shirley Jones

Text contributed by Sue Houston, Shirley Jones, Margaret Lane & Berenice Wright

Photography by Ann Williams-Fitzgerald of Auz Vizions Photographics, Paul Hurley & Shirley Jones

The RADF is a state and local government partnership in regional arts and cultural development.
The **Fishing Pier** was opened in 1999. This was the location of the rail bridge to the Mackay Harbour. When the Mackay Harbour opened in 1939 sugar was no longer shipped from the old wharves and the general river shipping trade declined. However, railway trade prospered and the River Street line was extended over the river to the harbour. Businesses in the street still unloaded goods from trains which stopped in front of the warehouses. In 1981 Qld Railways opened a new line to the harbour branching from Erakala. Sometime later the bridge and River Street line were sold and were demolished, with only a short span of the bridge remaining near the River Street levee bank for historical purposes. This span became the base for the Fishing Platform.

**1918 Cyclone Memorial**

This memorial commemorates the Mackay and district citizens who lost their lives during the cyclone and tidal surge on January 20 and 21, 1918. The cyclone remains Mackay's greatest natural disaster and one of the most destructive to cross the coast of Queensland. The Memorial also commemorates the citizens who survived the great cyclone and rebuilt the city of Mackay. It was their strength and courage that laid the foundations for Mackay's continued prosperity. Officially opened by Mayor Cr Julie Boyd on January 20, 1998.

Another memorial in this park is west of the Fishing Pier. A tree was planted and the memorial erected in 1997 dedicated to all survivors of sexual abuse.

This section of the **Pioneer River Levee**, from Sydney St to the boat ramp, was erected to protect the city from flood inundation. The levee is part of the system which extends from Shakespeare St to the River Street boat ramp. Mackay suffered very serious flooding in 1918 and 1958 and lesser, but still serious flooding, at numerous other times. A memorial marking the opening of this section is located just east of the entrance to the Forgan Bridge.

**Carpark, corner Brisbane & River Streets**

This was the site of Shepherd's Anvil Stores, one of Mackay's oldest business houses. Established in 1873, the buildings housed produce and hardware and remained in the hands of the founder and his descendants for many years (photo DM 04/04/91 p7). The building was demolished in 1978. It is now a Council carpark.