

WHITHER LOCAL HISTORY

by Neville Buch



“I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting today, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, and pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.”

Municipal Governance and Past History

HOW TO THINK ON MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

Encapsulating the Topic: Disconnection with the Understanding

Recently, in an online group called, The Foundations of Logic, a colleague quoted “Awareness of Ignorance is The Beginning of Wisdom,” from Socrates. I commented that I was more or less in the Socratic tradition, but for my own workings out, I believe the awareness must come from scoping out in thought beyond the established bubble thinking.

My AHA paper today is the history of municipal governance in Brisbane and the thinking which structures the council planning, asking the question how does that connect the idea to local history and commemoration.



Writing history is a perpetual exercise in
judgment

Cushing Strout

Source: The Many Meanings of History Part III. Compiled by Ferenc. M. Szasz. *The History Teacher* 8, no. 2 (1975): 208-16

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Cushing Strout stated, “Writing history is a perpetual exercise in judgement.” Added to that thought is...



History is central to my argument not just because history is central among the humanistic disciplines, but because, I am going to argue, philosophy has some very special relations to it.

Bernard Williams

Source: Unsourced in the Work

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Bernard Williams' judgement, that, "History is central to my argument not just because history is central to the humanistic discipline, but because, I am going to argue, philosophy has some very special relations to it."



Unfortunately, this is not how Council members, past and present, and the members of the communities, past and present, have thought through their own local histories.

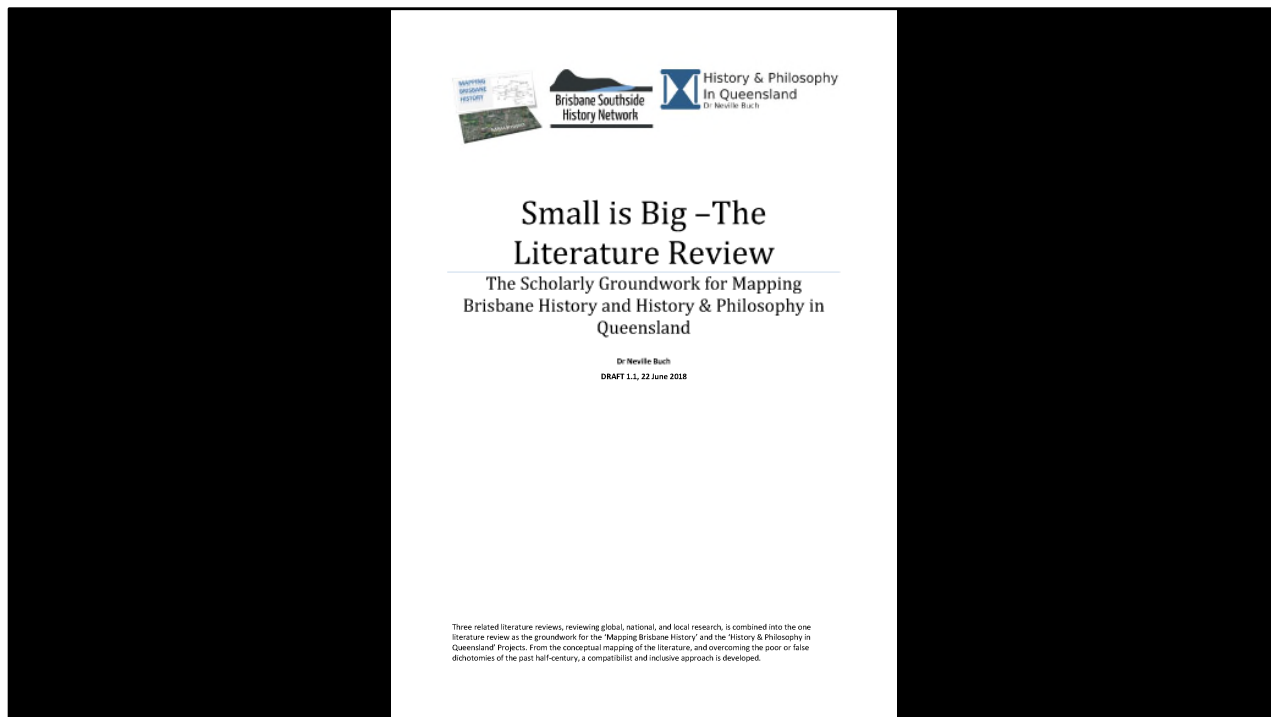
A usual perspective on Brisbane History is the mode of transportation. A common old view of Brisbane history relates the former tramway system. The modern view of Brisbane is the busway system with the promise the new Metro system.

Municipal Governance and Living History OWNING THEIR OWN Municipal Governance and Past History: STATES OF AFFAIRS*

Encapsulating the Topic: Disconnection with the Understanding

* a term in the discipline of philosophy

It seems as if the Council and the public do not understand the idea of philosophical states of affair as the histories. It is really straightforward but persons uneducated keep tripping up in the thinking. A state of affair is a situation or set of circumstances. In other words, it is the contextual analysis of historiography.



The mountain of primary and secondary source literature of Brisbane history demonstrated the disconnection with the understanding.



Clark and Fauset's
machinery display
at the Brisbane
Exhibition, 1904,
Source: SLQ.

Pugh's Almanac 1904 reveals a pre-1925 Brisbane Municipal Council culturally in touch with the local communities with the municipal balls, the erection of public baths, and interacts with the Brisbane School of Arts and the Brisbane Musical Union. However, searching through the Brisbane City Archives Records reveals a thinning out, over time, of the Council's concerns with the cultural life of the city.



Examining the Council minutes, from 1925 to 1937, there are no references to concepts of the urban, community, nor educational interests, except for rate and tariff exemptions or reductions for educational institutions and applications to show educational films in council-owned halls. Hence, the Council was able to have control over educational processes without making contributions to municipal education.



There were, however, private interests with tendered and non-tendered companies in Brisbane, such as the Suburban Property Investment Ltd. There were concerns of the rates for “suburban Neon sign lighting.” The closest that the Council got to understanding the intellectual issues of the suburbs was the support given to the Brisbane and Suburban Night Tennis Association. The year 1937 appears to be the first reference to community concerts in the Council minutes, even as such regular activities happened – and it is only the records are very quiet. Often, they happened without Council support, but from around 1937 community requests were made noticeable in the records. The completion of the Brisbane City Hall in 1930 might have had something to do with better Council support.

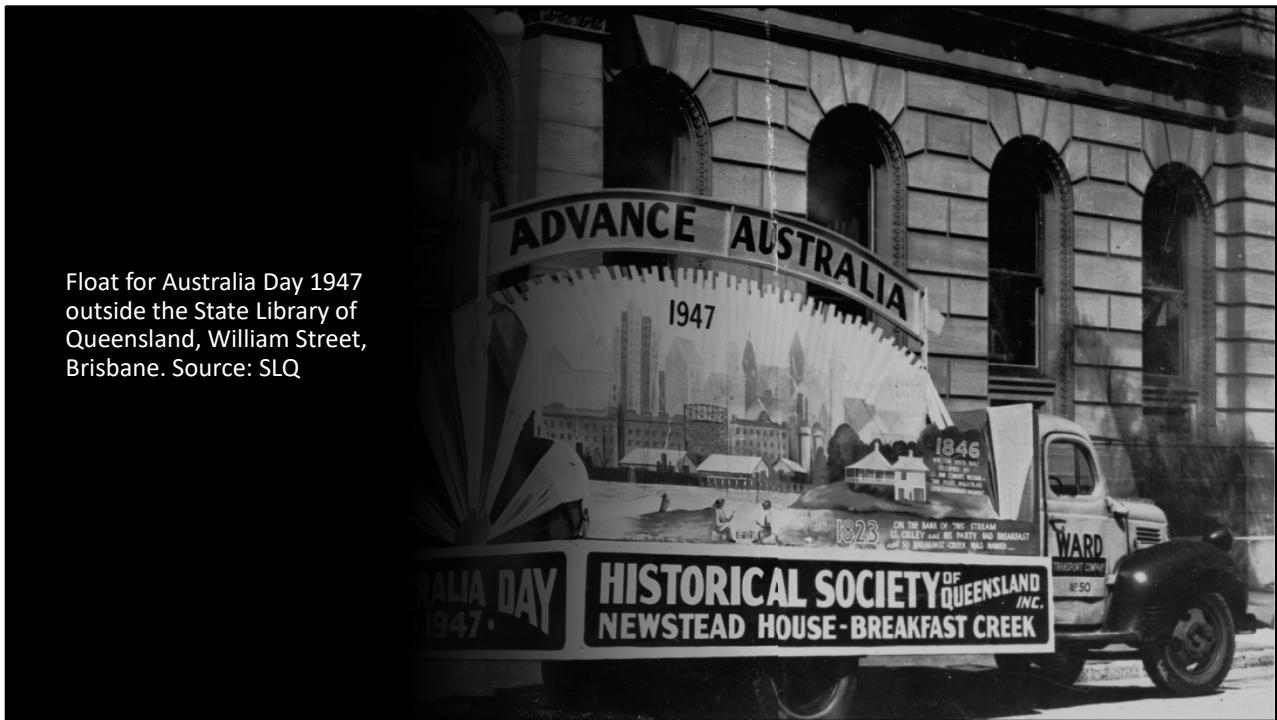


Any significant mentions of “the past” in the Council minutes pertain to such egotistical matters as the photographs of ‘Past Council’ or the accounting of past employees. Ideas of future policy were limited to gardens, land usage, roadside, gas service, water supply and funding. Thinking on ‘Commemoration’, ‘Research’, or ‘the World’ was completely absent. We find in the Council minutes communications with other Australian municipal entities, such as the Metropolitan Local Government Association in Perth, and in that sense “the world” did exist to some small measure.



The minutes were overwhelmed with the concept of ‘business’, as if the twentieth century American obsession with ‘business’ was the only way to think about municipal affairs. In 1933 Alderman Tait gave an account of his expenses “while on Council Business in America”, but there are very little records of what that business was.

Float for Australia Day 1947
outside the State Library of
Queensland, William Street,
Brisbane. Source: SLQ



Local Authorities Association of Queensland was active in the interchange with the Council from 1925. Delegates were appointed from the conference to attend the Association. Competing with those agendas of the association was the Local Government Clerks' Association (later, Municipal Officers' Association) and the Local Producers' Association. The policy of preference for locally manufactured articles for municipal use was there from 1925.



Key Examples in Municipal Governance and Past History: Era of County of Stanley Seat, NSW Legislative Council 1851-1856, and The Brisbane Municipal Council 1859-1903 Name and Characteristics	Role	Years in Office	Years of Life
Robert Cribb Radical Liberal, State Member, ADB: "joined the Anti-Corn Law League and was associated with the work of Cobden and Bright."	Pre-1859 'Municipal' Politician; Member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly for Town of Brisbane and East Moreton 1859-1867	1849-1859	1805–1893 
George Edmondstone Naïve Liberal, Butcher, State Member, ADB: "seldom spoke in the assembly and made little impression."	Mayor of Brisbane	1862	1809–1883 
William Stephens Social Liberal, Son of "Pioneer" William Blacket Stephens, State Minister for Agriculture and Education.	Chairman, Stephens Divisional Board/Shire Council (No. 2 Sub-Division)	1886 -1902 1912-1914	1857–1925 

Looking closely at the history of the Brisbane Councils, we find power shifting between a few representatives who were knowledgeable for municipal governance and many who were not.

Robert Cribb was a radical liberal, a member of the Anti-Corn Law League and associated with the work of Cobden and Bright before arriving in Brisbane.



George Edmondstone, however, was a naïve Liberal, if we are take seriously the words that he: "seldom spoke in the assembly and made little impression."

William Stephens was caught in the social liberalism and pioneer historiography.

Key Examples in Municipal Governance and Past History: Era of the Pre-Greater Brisbane Plan 1924 Name and Characteristics	Role	Years in Office	Years of Life
Digby Denham Conservative, Formed Denham Bros, Produce and Grain Merchants, Chairman of the New Swanbank Colliery Co., the 18th infamous Premier to was able to shut-down the 1912 Brisbane General Strike. ADB: "joined a group of Brisbane businessmen who in 1902-15 enjoyed their last period of political influence in a State dominated by rural interests."	Chairman of the Stephens Divisional Board	1892-1902	1859–1944 
Frederick Arthur Stimpson Nationalist, a representative in rural communities in outer townships to the City of Brisbane.	Stephens Shire Councillor (No. 3 Division) Oxley Ward	1916-1925 1925-1928	1891–1947 

Digby Denham was the architype of the narrow-thinking Brisbane businessman.



Frederick Arthur Stimpson, was a populist representative in rural communities of the outer townships.

Key Examples in Municipal Governance and Past History: Era of Nationalist and Progressivist Administrations of William Jolly and John Greene 1925-1934 Name and Characteristics	Role	Years in Office	Years of Life
G.A. Bayard Legacy of the Interconnections between former Premier Digby Denham, President of the Master Builders, William Juster, and the director of the retail department business, G.A. Bayard	Councillor, Stephens Shire Council	Pre-1925	18??–1933 
John Soden Nationalist, Legacy of the Business Interconnections. Son of “Pioneer” John Soden, of the Brisbane Omnibus fame.	Councillor, Stephens Ward	1925-1928	1878-1941
Robert Ellersleigh Nixon-Smith Archetype of the “NON-POLITICAL” out-laid rural city politician of the Nationalist and Progress party movements. ADB: “played a leading role in unifying the non-Labor parties.”	Councillor, Logan Ward	1931-1934	1890–1947 

G.A. Bayard was the archetype of the city’s retail interests.



John Soden was the son of the “Pioneer” John Soden, of the Brisbane Omnibus fame.

Robert Nixon-Smith was central figure in the Nationalist and Progress party movements.

Key Examples in Municipal Governance and Past History: Era of the Interim Labor Administrations of Alfred Jones and Frank Roberts 1934-1940 and 1952-1955 Name and Characteristics	Role	Years in Office	Years of Life
Alfred Jones Teacher, State Member, and Secretary for Mines 1917-1929. ADB: "After a political hiatus during the Depression, Jones successfully contested the lord mayoralty...immediately set about reinstating the original Greater Brisbane concept after the disastrous subversion of metropolitan administration by the conservative Moore [state] government."	4th Lord Mayor of Brisbane	1934-1940	1871–1945 
Frank Roberts Teacher-Trained, Union man, co-held positions of State Member and Lord Mayor. ADB: "Parsimony was a hallmark of his stewardship. Cutting through red tape, he used second-hand pipes to connect residents in some outlying suburbs to reticulated water."	6th Lord Mayor of Brisbane	1952-1955	1913–1992 


Alfred Jones reinstated the original Greater Brisbane concept after the disastrous subversion of metropolitan administration by the conservative Moore state government.

Frank Roberts was parsimonious but a great recycler for infrastructure.




Key Examples in Municipal Governance and Past History: Era of Citizens' Municipal Organisation Administrations of John Beals Chandler and Reg Groom 1940-1952 and 1955-1961 Name and Characteristics	Role	Years in Office	Years of Life
John Beals Chandler Retailer, chairman and managing director of the Chandler group of companies, purchased of Fame Television (Qld) Pty Ltd in 1959. ADB: "worked closely with R. H. Robinson, the assistant under-secretary of the Department of Health and Home Affairs, and also with the town clerk and city administrator J. C. Slaughter to rationalize and revitalize the city's management...formulated a judicious wartime policy of 'Preservation, Conservation, and Preparation' which produced a five-year programme of postwar city development estimated to cost £15 million."	5th Lord Mayor of Brisbane Councillor of Taringa shire pre-1925	1940-1952	1887–1962 
Reg Groom Accountant and Auditor, senior partner of R. G. Groom & Co., managing director (1938-58) of Unit Trusts Ltd and a board-member (1948-56) of General Rubber Co. Ltd. ADB: "...a careful and astute businessman, as lord mayor he was unable to deal effectively with the city's financial and developmental problems. Influenced by his wife and dominated by the town clerk, J. C. Slaughter, he sometimes ignored the sound advice of his fellow aldermen and departmental officers."	7th Lord Mayor of Brisbane	1955-1961	1906–1987 

John Chandler was the Council's first modern PR management guru, with the slogan, 'Preservation, Conservation, and Preparation.'

Reg Groom was famously rigorous as 'The Lord Mayor Accountant' but ignored advice and thus intelligence.

Key Examples in Municipal Governance and Past History: Era of The celebrated/infamous Clem Jones Labor Administration 1961-1975 Name and Characteristics	Role	Years in Office	Years of Life
<p>Clem Jones</p> <p>Surveyor, ended light rail in Brisbane, Chair of the Darwin Reconstruction Commission from 1975 to 1978. Wikipedia: "In 1961, Brisbane was a city with no town planning, many unpaved streets, limited water supply and few areas with sewers—relying instead on outhouses or septic tanks. Through the 1960s Jones successfully led the council to develop a town plan, seal roads, improve drainage and connect sewers to most of the city."</p>	8th Lord Mayor of Brisbane	1961-1975	<p>1918-2007</p> 

The Surveyor Clem Jones was either celebrated or infamous. He fixed the forlorn sewer program problem, but ended light rail in Brisbane, only for the state and municipal authority today spending billions returning light rail. Oh God, the idiocy! Which is bubble thinking.

Key Examples in Municipal Governance and Past History: Decade of Change in the Labor Administration of Bryan Walsh, Frank Sleeman, Roy Harvey 1975-1985 Name and Characteristics	Role	Years in Office	Years of Life
Bryan Walsh Teacher, a hidden figure in the history, a fill-in when Clem Jones announced he would not stand in the upcoming election.	9th Lord Mayor of Brisbane	1975-1976	1935- 
Frank Sleeman Salesman, a war survivor from Jentsuji Prison Camp Japan. Wikipedia: "The major project of his time in office was the building of the site for the 1982 Commonwealth Games, which is now named the Sleeman Centre in his honour."	10th Lord Mayor of Brisbane	1976-1982	1915-2000 
Roy Harvey Labor Party worker, State Member, Dying in 2006, Harvey was accorded a state funeral. Wikipedia: "His wife, Pearl, acted as Lady Mayoress. His term included Brisbane's hosting of the 1982 Commonwealth Games."	11th Lord Mayor of Brisbane	1982-1985	1921-2006 

Bryan Walsh is one of a few hidden figures in the history.



Frank Sleeman is famed for the 1982 Commonwealth Games.

But the honour of hosting the event was Roy Harvey and Lady Mayoress Pearl.

Key Examples in Municipal Governance and Past History: The Age of the Americanised Flair in The Sallyanne Atkinson Liberal Administration 1985-1991 Name and Characteristics	Role	Years in Office	Years of Life
<p>Sallyanne Atkinson</p> <p>Journalist, Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in History and Political Science, in 1967 UQ, research assistant to the Hon Jim Killen, Minister for Defence from 1975 to 1978, first and only female Lord Mayor of Brisbane. Wikipedia: "...eventually defeated in 1991 in a narrow-upset election win by the virtually unknown Jim Soorley, who received preferences from the Greens candidate Drew Hutton." [post-municipal] "...contribution to Australia's international reputation as a location for sporting events, and her contribution to government and the community."</p>	12th Lord Mayor of Brisbane	1985-1991	1942-






Sallyanne Atkinson was one of the most intelligent Lord Mayors and the first and only female Lord Mayor of Brisbane. A history graduate, Sallyanne was a good friend to several members of the Department of History at UQ during her tenure.

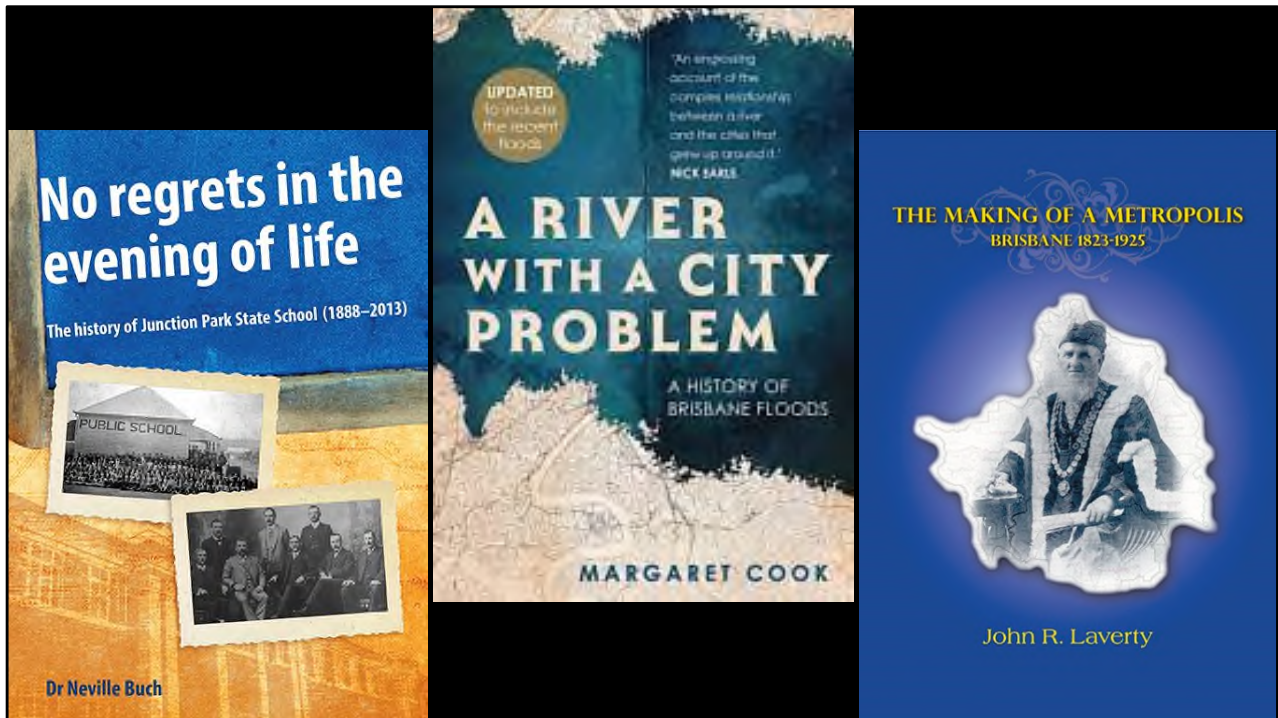
Key Examples in Municipal Governance and Past History: The Age of the Communitarian Compassion in the Labor Administrations of Jim Soorley and Tim Quinn 1991-2003 and 2003-2004 Name and Characteristics	Role	Years in Office	Years of Life
<p>Jim Soorley</p> <p>Former Roman Catholic Priest, introduction of the CityCat ferries, advancing the Busway system, building the Inner City Bypass, starting Brisbane Festival including the popular Riverfire fireworks and the River Feast, bringing all sewage treatment up to at least secondary treatment standards, a citywide recycling program, gas CNG powered buses, starting air conditioning on buses, accelerating the purchase of "at risk" bushland, Implementing a system of long term re-habilitation for old municipal solid waste tips and a long-term plan to link riverfront land and open it up to the people of Brisbane through a series of pathways called Riverwalk. Wikipedia: [known in] "a shift from Brisbane Council being only concerned with 'rates, roads, rubbish' to taking on issues such as drug use, homelessness, domestic violence and social justice."</p>	13th Lord Mayor of Brisbane	1991-2003	1951- 
<p>Tim Quinn</p> <p>Teacher, Chair of the Civic Cabinet of Development and Planning during his mayoral period of dramatic transformation in Brisbane. Wikipedia: "Urban Renewal of the inner city commenced, Local Area Plans were established in conjunction with character housing protection provision to retain Brisbane's distinctive 'tin and timber' character. Ugly 'six pack' units were banned with design guidelines overhauled and Suburban Centre Improvement Schemes were also commenced in 1996 to revitalise traditional local shopping strips and are now widespread throughout the city."</p>	14th Lord Mayor of Brisbane	2003-2004	1949- 

As an intellectual, Jim Soorley made "a shift from Brisbane Council being only concerned with 'rates, roads, rubbish' to taking on issues such as drug use, homelessness, domestic violence and social justice."

Tim Quinn followed Soorley's direction with Urban Renewal being an important intellectual theme.

Key Examples in Municipal Governance and Past History: The Age of the Bewildering LNP Administration of Campbell Newman, Graham Quick, Adrian Schrinner 2004-2023		Role	Years in Office	Years of Life
Name and Characteristics				
Campbell Newman Military Officer, Engineer, Father (Kevin) Minister in the Fraser government, Mother (Jocelyn) Senator for Tasmania, stripper of the Council bureaucracy, first term only -- the TransApex package of bridge, traffic and tunnel projects, [post-municipal] 38th Premier of Queensland. Wikipedia: "one of 25 mayors from across the world shortlisted for the 2010 World Mayor Prize...declared the fifth-best mayor in the world."		15th Lord Mayor of Brisbane	2004-2011	1963- 
Graham Quick LNP Party Worker, elected as Councillor for Rochedale Ward in 1985, administered one-third of the council's total budget expenditure for the implementation of TransApex, the road network and traffic management. Wikipedia: [post-municipal] "...In December 2019, the federal Infrastructure Minister, Michael McCormack, appointed Quirk to the board of Infrastructure Australia, which provides advice to government and industry on Australia's infrastructure policy and projects."		16th Lord Mayor of Brisbane	2011-2019	1958- 
Adrian Schrinner Military Officer, attended Citipointe Christian College in Mansfield, but does not publicly disclose religious beliefs, expanded the bureaucracy in the new Finance, Administration and Economic Development Committee. Wikipedia: "[Deputy Major role] oversight of major projects such as the \$1.5 billion Legacy Way Tunnel, open level crossing eliminations at Bald Hills and Geebung and the reconstruction of the New Farm Riverwalk after the 2011 Queensland floods."		17th Lord Mayor of Brisbane	2019-Incumbent	1977- 

The current long LNP administrations of Campbell Newman, Graham Quick, and Adrian Schrinner has lost the plot. That is not a partisan statement, I do not believe that a counter-Labor administration would have been much different.



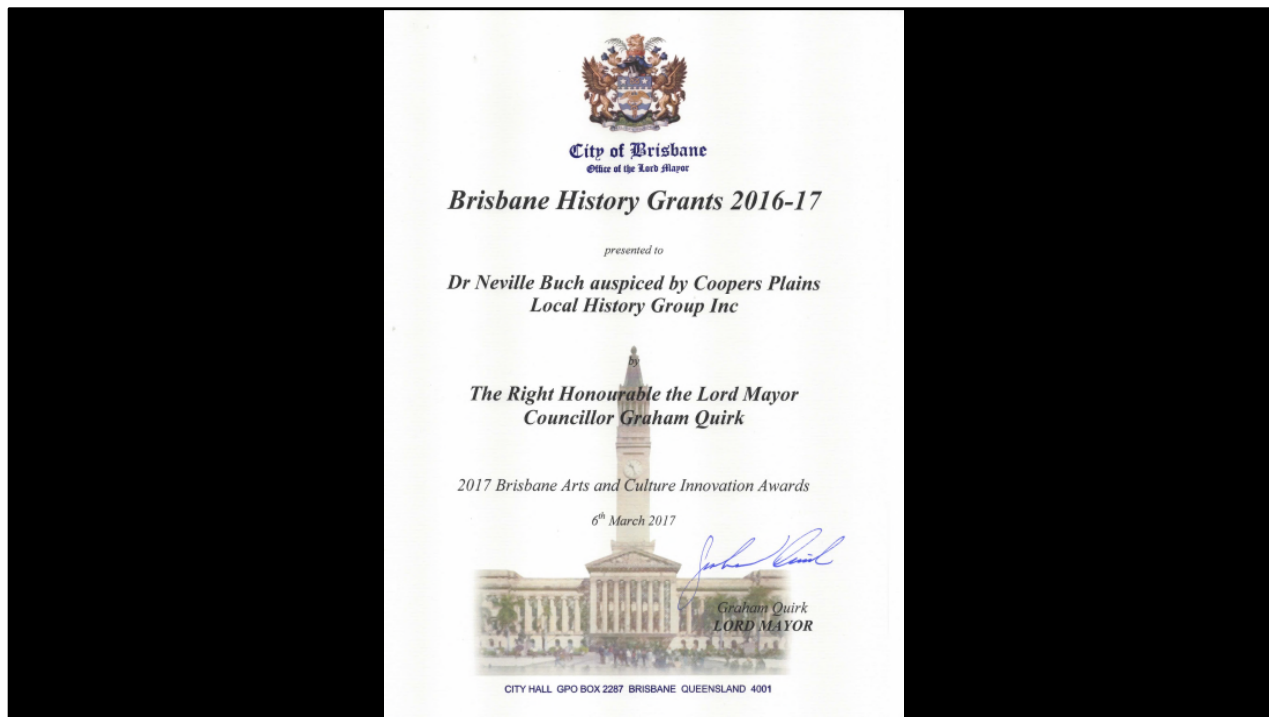
The change of direction of the current long administration is for large transportation infrastructure. One-third of the council's total budget expenditure is for the implementation of TransApex, the road network and traffic management, with a package of bridge, traffic and tunnel projects. In recent years that has meant the \$1.5 billion Legacy Way Tunnel, open level crossing eliminations at Bald Hills and Geebung, but not at Coopers Plains and Runcorn, and the reconstruction of the New Farm Riverwalk after the 2011 Queensland floods. The last project points to the significance of the Council to think intellectually in the very long past administrations, as Margaret Cook has well demonstrated in her work. The late John Lavery also contributed to the intellectual critique of the Brisbane City Council.

Municipal Governance and Past History

THE GREAT GAP BETWEEN THE COUNCIL AND MUNICIPAL KNOWLEDGE OF LOCAL HISTORY ORGANISATIONS

Encapsulating the Topic: Disconnection with the Understanding

There is a great gap between the Council's, with the general public's understanding of local history, and against the municipal knowledge of local history organisations.



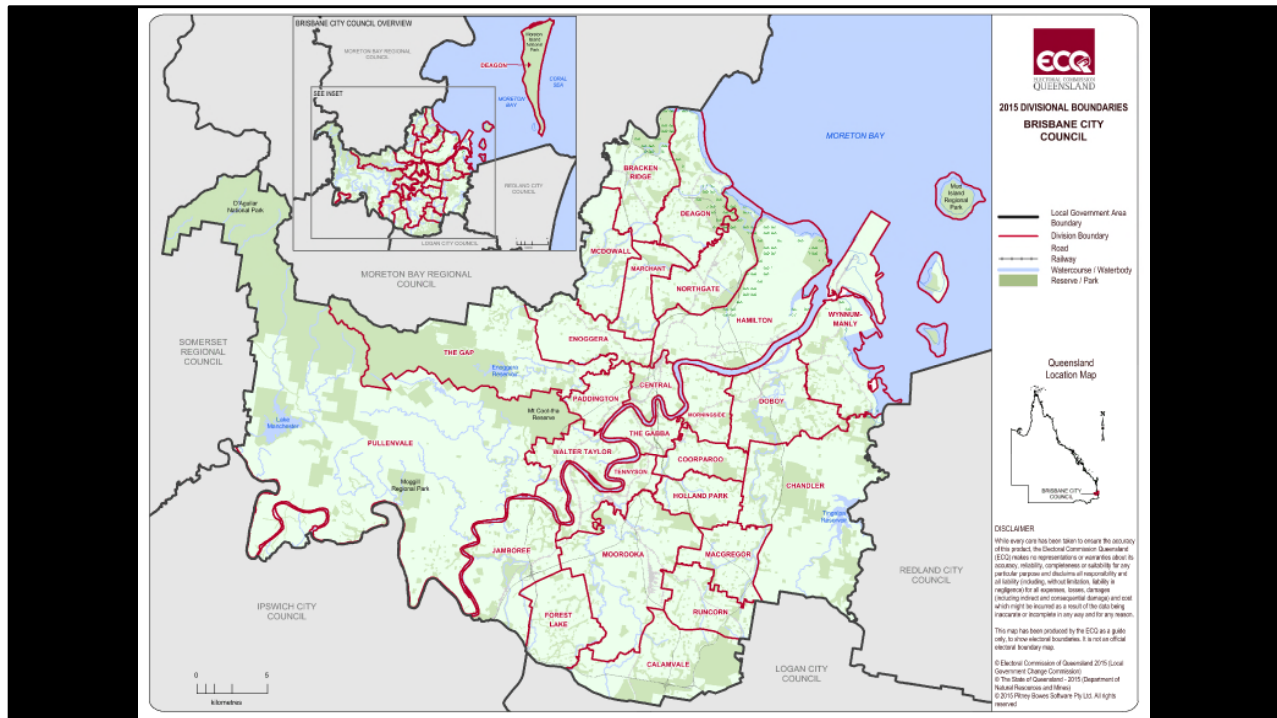
The local history organisations in Brisbane are not merely the Brisbane History Group Inc., nor the sole providence of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, even though the bubble thinking conservative would like it to be the case. The landscape is made up of the Brisbane Southside History Network with 16 groups south of the river, and 17 groups on the unnetworked northside.

Municipal Governance and Past History LOCAL STUDIES METHODOLOGY AND UNDERSTANDING

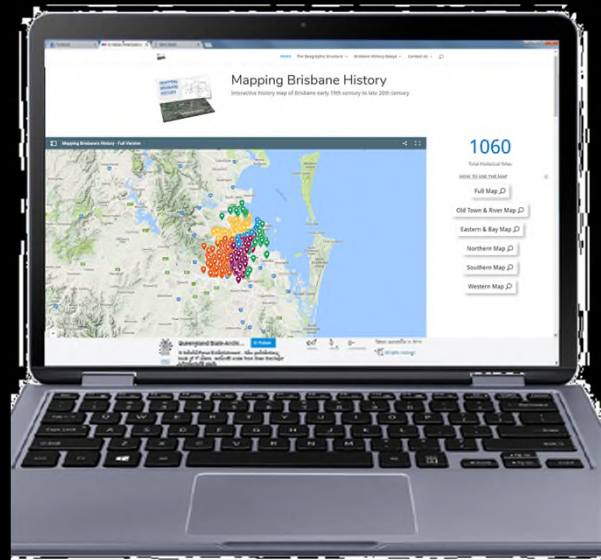
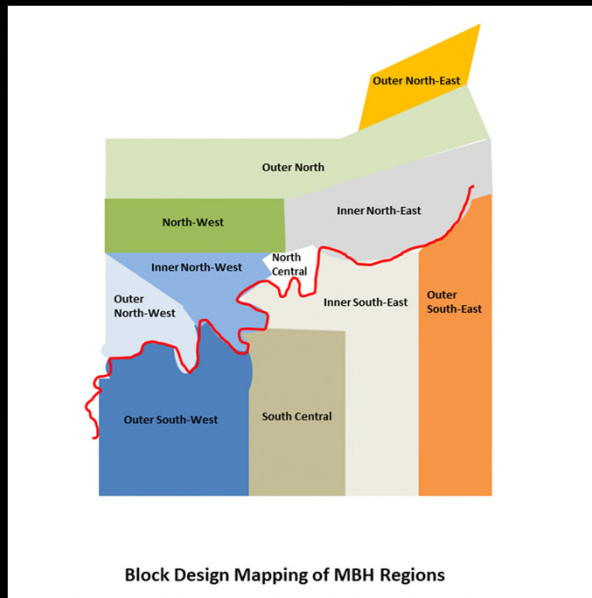
Mapping Brisbane History:
Landscape and Political Mapping

Encapsulating the Topic: Connection with the Understanding

The only way to bring the connection with understanding Brisbane history is through the local history organisation, but with a specific geographic and conceptual methodology.



The year 1925, with elections in March, and from the 1924 Greater Brisbane Plan, produced what was the largest city in area size in the Southern Hemisphere. Today, it is largest City Council in Australia by population and area, with the jurisdiction which includes 26 wards and 27 elected councillors covering 1,338 km² (517 sq mi).



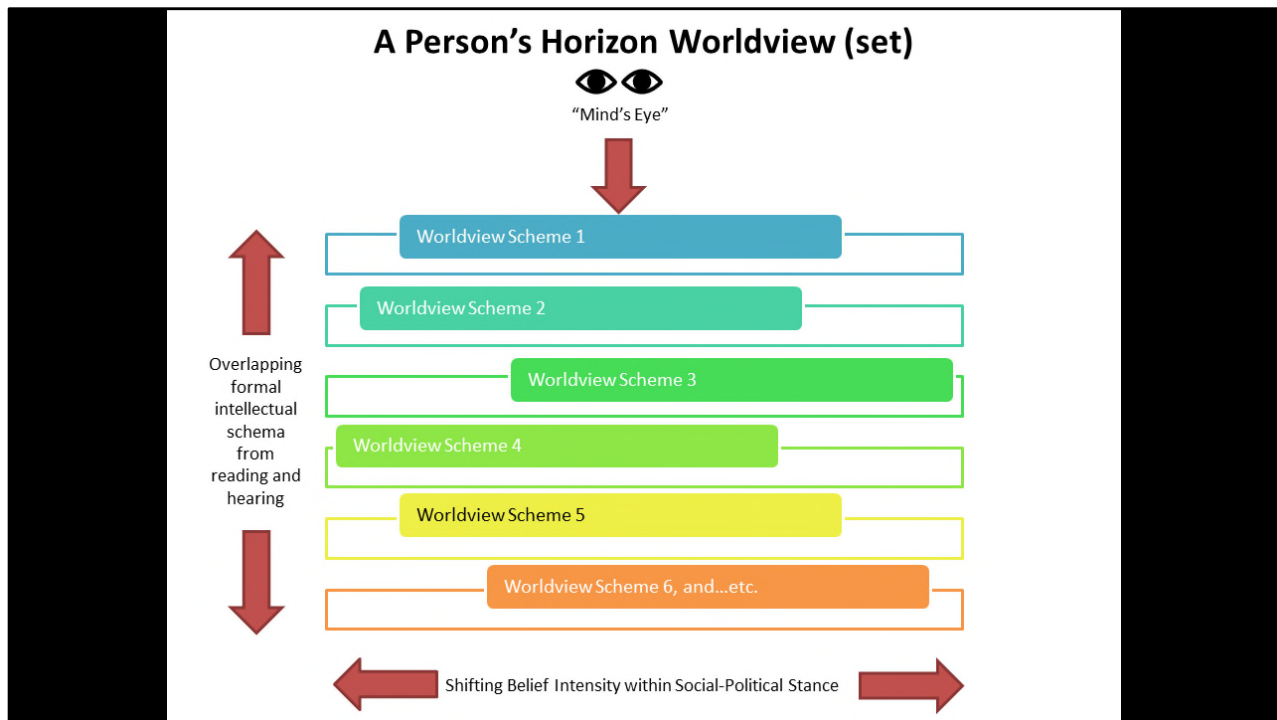
Since 2012 the Mapping Brisbane History Project has been making the connection with understanding Brisbane history. It has established a pattern of regional groupings which has been much more effective in understanding than the many changes in ward boundaries and the production of new wards.

Municipal Governance and Past History LOCAL STUDIES METHODOLOGY AND UNDERSTANDING

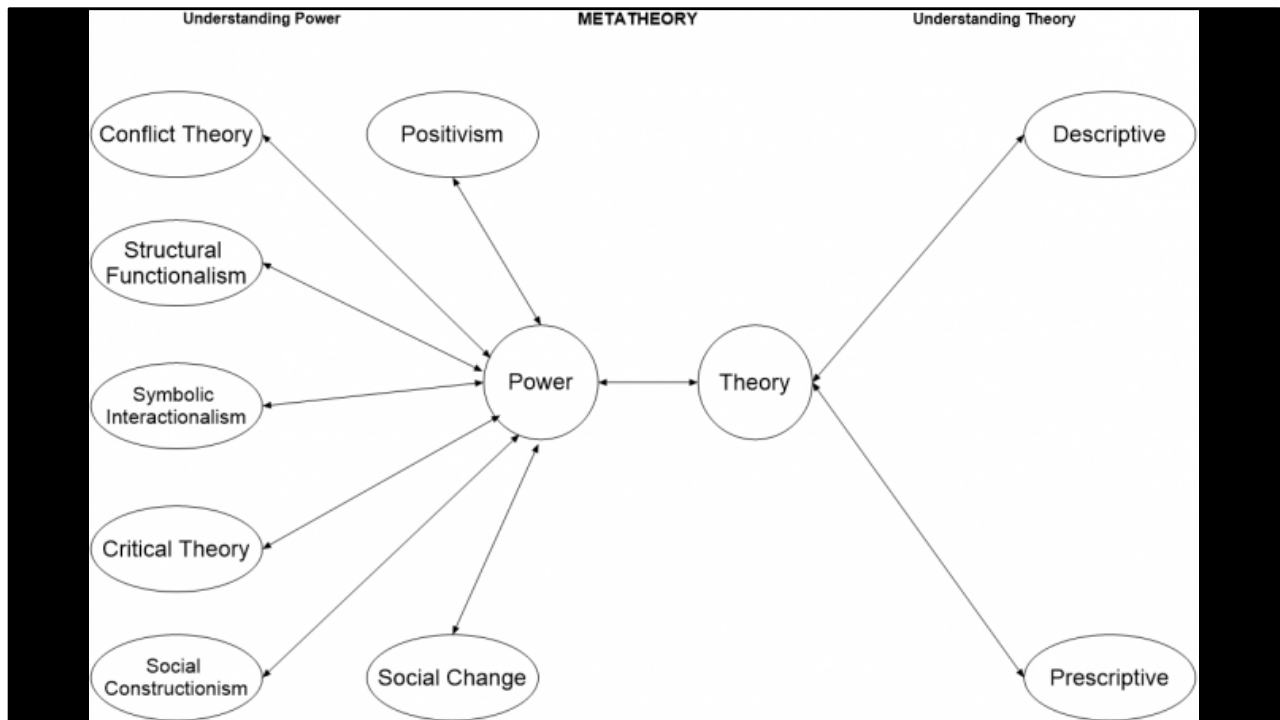
Mapping Brisbane History: Conceptual Mapping

Encapsulating the Topic: Connection with the Understanding

Unfortunately, what is difficult to understand – since our primary, secondary, and universities schools have stopped teaching intelligently, pathways into geography and local history – are the different conceptual mapping involved.



The Council's public relations machine treats persons in the machine thinking. But person's thinking is not made for singular messaging. A person's thinking is layered in full or partial schemas for viewing the world.



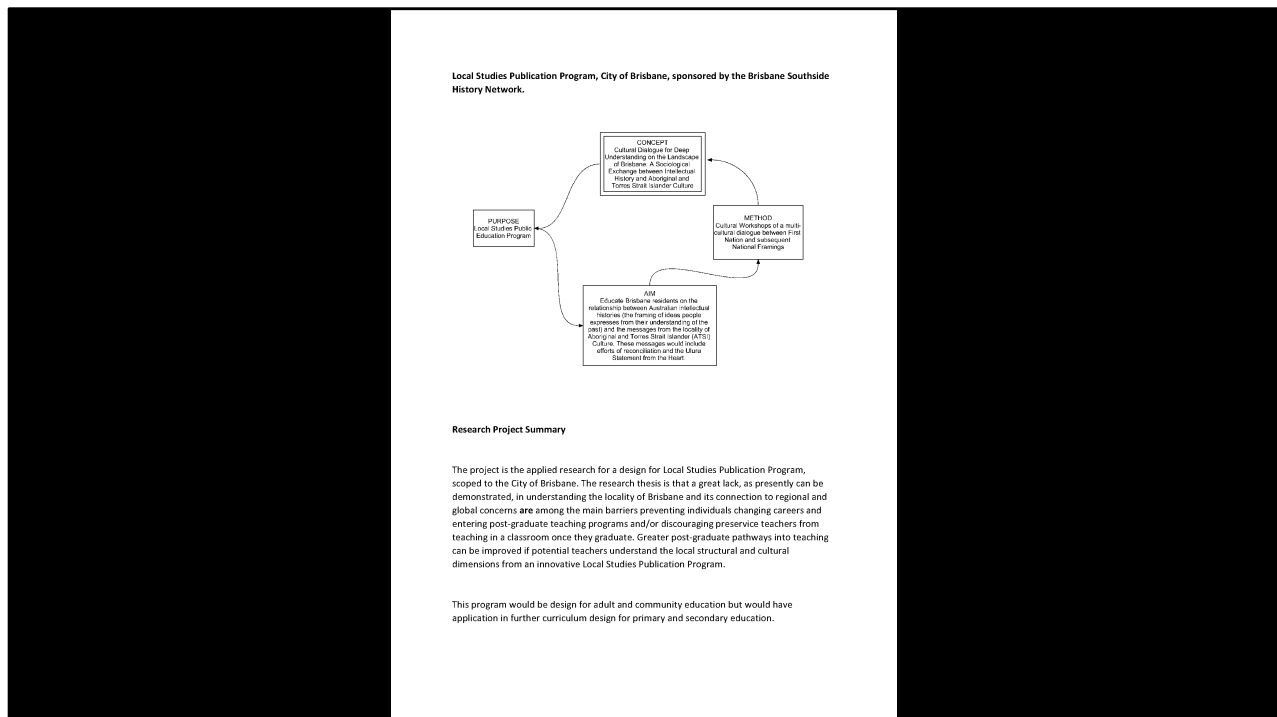
Furthermore, above the descriptive worldviews, scholars in local history, local sociology, and local philosophy, work in the space of the metatheory. The work shows why the Council's descriptions fails intelligently.

Municipal Governance and Past
History
LOCAL STUDIES METHODOLOGY
AND UNDERSTANDING

CONCLUSION:
Council Supported
Community Education

Encapsulating the Topic: Connection with the Understanding

To conclude in an argument for Council-supported Community Education.



The purpose of such a community education program is to properly educate in local studies.

The plan starts with the concept of a cultural dialogue for deep understanding on the landscape of Brisbane, which would include a sociological exchange between intellectual history and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

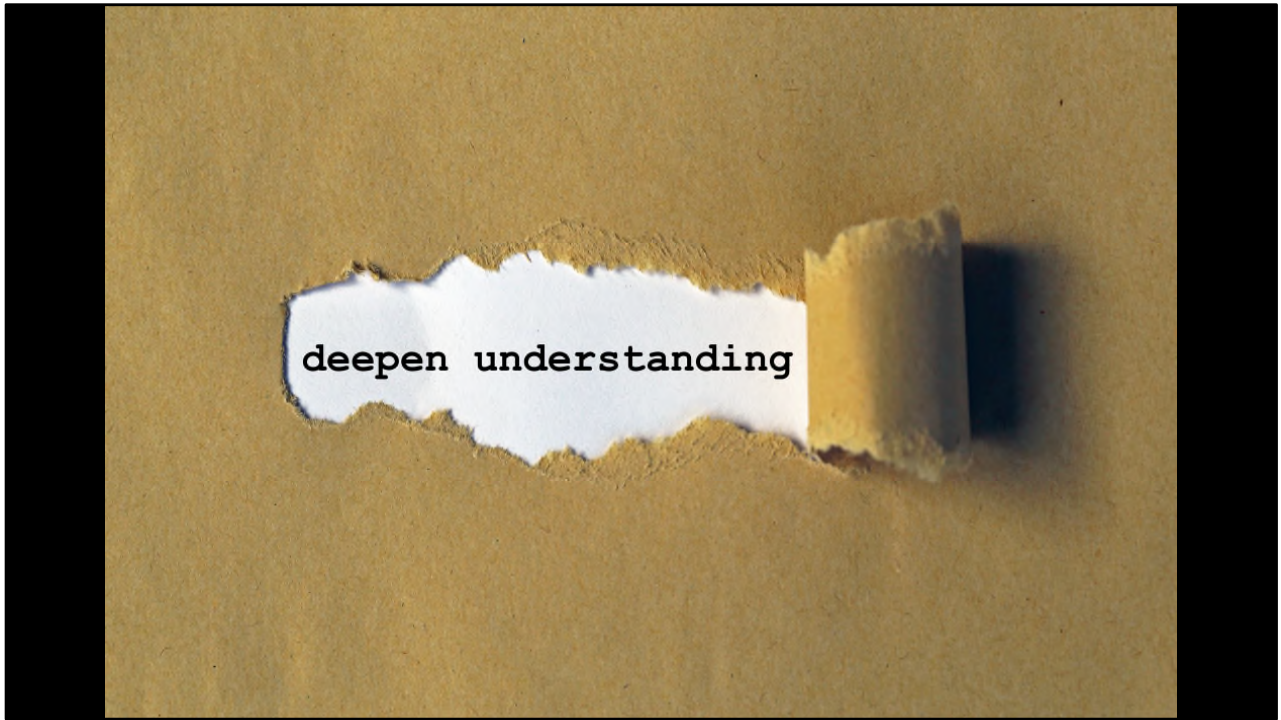


A method would be multi-cultural workshops on Brisbane histories and including first nations persons.

The aim, and hopefully the outcome, is that the Council and the Brisbane public will have clear ideas and their fit as schemas (intelligently) on the local histories for 'all of us' including the current indigenous movement for The Voice.



In the meantime, the Council. And the Lord Mayor has no plans.



Thank you.