

The show goes on...

Queensland's biggest and best loved show, the EKKA, is ready to accept thousands of exhibitors and visitors after a comprehensive fire safety upgrade.

The \$2 million improvement of various show facilities, including the heritage listed beef, dairy and horse pavilions, is the culmination of one year of intense work by the Royal National Association (RNA) the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) and engineering and consulting firm, Arup.

One of the main aims of the wide-ranging fire safety upgrade, which commenced after the 2004 EKKA, was to be considerate to the history and traditions of its long term exhibitors who sleep in the animal pavilions during the 10 day show.

RNA Chief, Mr Jonathon Tunny, said the RNA is committed to working to ensure the safety of pavilion facilities for exhibitors and is happy with the outcome of the upgrade.

"I pay tribute to the immense efforts by the joint RNA/Arup team, and thank the QFRS for the time, support and expertise it has provided the RNA over the past year. It's been a team effort and we'll continue to work together with QFRS and other emergency agencies to ensure a great EKKA in 2005 and beyond," he said.

Leader of Arup Fire, Mr Chris Gildersleeve said, "Any change in the way the show is run, in particular the tradition of exhibitor's sleeping close to their animals, was going to be met with understandable objection by the exhibitors and pavilion superintendents."

"That's why the project team has worked hard to address the fire safety challenges by adopting a proactive, open and consultative approach to securing approvals from the RNA's members and superintendents, and local and State Environmental Planning Agency (EPA) representatives."

QFRS Assistant Commissioner of Brisbane Region Iain MacKenzie said he was pleased to see the implementation of the significant improvements to the safety of occupants of the site.

"It has been a challenging process to establish the most effective way to upgrade buildings of such diverse age, use and construction, and I believe this is the first time such an upgrade has been undertaken in Queensland."

A highly consultative and collaborative approach by the team was integral in securing all necessary approvals from Brisbane City Council for the upgrade, particularly as the solutions to the EKKA's fire safety issues were in many ways unique. The final program of works required the development of customised engineered solutions which could not be readily derived using standard building regulations alone.

With the fire safety upgrade complete, the RNA is also looking to the future with a masterplan for the 22 hectare EKKA showground. The long-term development vision for the site respects and retains its character and at the same time provides a road map for possible future enhancements.

"The project team was careful to ensure that the fire safety upgrades and associated expenditure on the pavilions complements this vision." said Arup Project Manager, Adrian Morey.

Mr Morey further commented "The EKKA has been held annually at the same time of year for the last 130 years with only two exceptions, so with that in mind we had to ensure that the were completed the works on time to allow the Show to proceed without any change"

The 2005 EKKA will run from 11 to 20 August.

Suggested contacts:

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