

## **Colmslie Beach Reserve**

### **152 Colmslie Road, Murarrie**

Once one of Queensland's most important industrial sites, it is hard to believe the beautiful Colmslie Beach Reserve with its relaxed riverside setting and grounds full of mature trees was, until the 1980s, the site of a busy Brisbane abattoir.

*Navigational hint:* while waiting at the Northshore Hamilton ferry terminal, look across to the south side of the river for the small stretch of sandy beach near the Gateway Bridge. The Colmslie Beach Reserve is between the large, roofed structure to the left and a tall brick chimney to the right, a remnant of the former Commonwealth Acetate and Lime Factory.

Swifts Meat Works, originally an American meat packing company, began business on the banks of the Brisbane River in 1913. It quickly established its role in the local economy as one of the largest industrial operations and employers in Queensland. By 1928, at least 530 employees were on the payroll.

The complex included a wharf for stock delivery and export, large holding yards and a railway siding to facilitate stock and passenger transport. The meat works was credited with providing the only passenger rail service for its workers in Brisbane.

The gardens were a particular source of pride for the meat works, with beds blooming with roses, poppies and sweet peas. Jacaranda and African Tulip trees were planted in an avenue and can still be seen in the reserve today.

Meat processing works were a dominant industry in the Murarrie-Cannon Hill riverfront areas in the early 20th Century. From 1907, Thomas Borthwick & Sons operated another large meat works just downstream.

The 1930s brought big changes to the meat industry with the Queensland Government taking control of private meat works upon the recommendations of the then Beef Cattle Industry Commission. Swifts was acquired at a cost of £490,000 (equivalent to \$45 million today). It became known as the Brisbane Abattoir and it supplied meat for local, interstate and export trade.

The abattoir was moved in the 1980s, and in the late 1990s the site was purchased by Brisbane City Council and converted to public parkland.