

[Skip to Main Content Area](#)

[Home](#)

Search this site:

Search

- [Home](#)
- [Quintessential Queensland](#)
 - [Distinctiveness](#)
 - [Distinctiveness: how Queensland is a distinctive landscape and culture](#)
 - [Ailan Kastom Bilong Torres Strait](#)
 - [Channel Country](#)
 - [Darling Downs](#)
 - [Islands](#)
 - [Neighbours: Asia and the Pacific](#)
 - [Queensland brand](#)
 - [Queensland on a tea-towel](#)
 - [The 200 kilometre city](#)
 - [Perceptions](#)
 - [Perceptions: how people understand the landscape](#)
 - [From runs to closer settlement](#)
 - [Geological survey of Queensland](#)
 - [Mapping a new colony, 1860-80](#)
 - [Mapping the Torres Strait: from TI to Magani Malu and Zenadh Kes](#)
 - [Order in Paradise: a colonial gold field](#)
 - [Queensland atlas, 1865](#)
 - [Queensland mapping since 1900](#)
 - [Walkabout](#)
 - [Queenslanders](#)
 - [Queenslanders: people in the landscape](#)
 - [Aboriginal heroes: episodes in the colonial landscape](#)
 - [Australian South Sea Islanders](#)
 - [Chinatowns](#)
 - [Colonial immigration to Queensland](#)
 - [Greek Cafés in the landscape of Queensland](#)
 - [Italians in north Queensland](#)
 - [Lebanese in rural Queensland](#)
 - [Queensland clothing](#)
 - [Queensland for ‘the best kind of population, primary producers’](#)
- [Distance](#)
 - [Movement](#)
 - [Movement: how people move through the landscape](#)
 - [Air travel in Queensland](#)
 - [Bicycling through Brisbane, 1896](#)
 - [Cobb & Co](#)
 - [Journey to Hayman Island, 1938](#)
 - [Law and story-strings](#)
 - [Movable heritage of North Queensland](#)
 - [The Queen in Queensland, 1954](#)
 - [Transient Chinese in colonial Queensland](#)
 - [Travelling times by rail](#)
 - [Pathways](#)
 - [Pathways: how things move through the landscape and where they are made](#)
 - [Aboriginal dreaming paths and trading ways](#)
 - [Chinese traders in the nineteenth century](#)

- [Introducing the cane toad](#)
- [Pituri bag](#)
- [Press and the media](#)
- [Radio in Queensland](#)
- [The telephone in Queensland](#)
- [‘A little bit of love for me and a murder for my old man’: the Queensland Bush Book Club](#)
- [Division](#)
 - [Separation](#)
 - [Separation: divisions in the landscape](#)
 - [Asylums in the landscape](#)
 - [Brisbane River](#)
 - [Changing landscape of radicalism](#)
 - [Civil government boundaries](#)
 - [Convict Brisbane](#)
 - [Dividing Queensland - Pauline Hanson’s One Nation Party](#)
 - [Hospitals in the landscape](#)
 - [Indigenous health](#)
 - [Palm Island](#)
 - [Secession movements](#)
 - [Separate spheres: gender and dress codes](#)
 - [Separating land, separating culture](#)
 - [Stone walls do a prison make: law on the landscape](#)
 - [The 1967 Referendum – the State comes together?](#)
 - [Utopian communities](#)
 - [Whiteness in the tropics](#)
 - [Conflict](#)
 - [Conflict: how people contest the landscape](#)
 - [A tale of two elections – One Nation and political protest](#)
 - [Battle of Brisbane – Australian masculinity under threat](#)
 - [Dangerous spaces - youth politics in Brisbane, 1960s-70s](#)
 - [Fortress Queensland 1942-45](#)
 - [Great Shearers’ Strike of 1891](#)
 - [Iwasaki project](#)
 - [Johannes Bjelke-Petersen: straddling a barbed wire fence](#)
 - [Mount Etna: Queensland's longest environmental conflict](#)
 - [Native Police](#)
 - [Skyrail Cairns](#)
 - [Staunch but conservative – the trade union movement in Rockhampton](#)
 - [The Chinese question](#)
 - [Thomas Wentworth Wills and Cullin-la-ringo Station](#)
- [Dreaming](#)
 - [Imagination](#)
 - [Imagination: how people have imagined Queensland](#)
 - [Brisbane River and Moreton Bay: Thomas Welsby](#)
 - [Imagining Queensland in film and television production](#)
 - [Literary mapping of Brisbane in the 1990s](#)
 - [Looking at Mount Coot-tha](#)
 - [Mapping the Macqueen farm](#)
 - [Mapping the mythic: Hugh Sawrey's ‘outback’](#)
 - [People’s Republic of Woodford](#)
 - [The Pineapple Girl](#)
 - [The writers of Tamborine Mountain](#)
 - [Vance and Nettie Palmer](#)

- [Memory](#)
 - [Memory: how people remember the landscape](#)
 - [Berajondo and Mill Point: remembering place and landscape](#)
 - [Cemeteries in the landscape](#)
 - [Landscapes of memory: Tjapukai Dance Theatre and Laura Festival](#)
 - [Out where the dead towns lie](#)
 - [Queensland in miniature: the Brisbane Exhibition](#)
 - [Roadside ++++ memorials](#)
 - [Shipwrecks as graves](#)
 - [The Dame in the tropics: Nellie Melba](#)
 - [Tinnenburra](#)
 - [Vanished heritage](#)
 - [War memorials](#)
- [Curiosity](#)
 - [Curiosity: knowledge through the landscape](#)
 - [A playground for science: Great Barrier Reef](#)
 - [Duboisia hopwoodii: a colonial curiosity](#)
 - [Great Artesian Basin: water from deeper down](#)
 - [In search of Landsborough](#)
 - [James Cook's hundred days in Queensland](#)
 - [Mutual curiosity – Aboriginal people and explorers](#)
 - [Queensland Acclimatisation Society](#)
 - [Queensland's own sea monster: a curious tale of loss and regret](#)
 - [St Lucia: degrees of landscape](#)
- [Development](#)
 - [Exploitation](#)
 - [Exploitation: taking and using things from the landscape](#)
 - [A culture of exploitation](#)
 - [Coal](#)
 - [From whaling to whale watching](#)
 - [Mining](#)
 - [Pearling](#)
 - [Prostitution, 1880s-1900s](#)
 - [Sandmining](#)
 - [Sugar slaves](#)
 - [Trees](#)
 - [Transformation](#)
 - [Transformation: how the landscape has changed and been modified](#)
 - [Cultivation](#)
 - [Gold](#)
 - [Kill, cure, or strangle: Atherton Tablelands](#)
 - [National parks in Queensland](#)
 - [Pastoralism 1860s–1915](#)
 - [Prickly pear](#)
 - [Repurchasing estates: the transformation of Durundur](#)
 - [Soil](#)
 - [Sugar](#)
 - [Sunshine Coast](#)
 - [The Brigalow](#)
 - [Walter Reid Cultural Centre, Rockhampton: back again](#)
 - [Survival](#)
 - [Survival: how the landscape impacts on people](#)
 - [Depression era](#)
 - [Droughts and floods and rail](#)

- [Missions and reserves](#)
- [Queensland British Food Corporation](#)
- [Rockhampton's great flood of 1918](#)
- [Station homesteads](#)
- [Tropical cyclones](#)
- [Wreck of the SS Quetta](#)
- [Pleasure](#)
 - [Pleasure: how people enjoy the landscape](#)
 - [Bushwalking in Queensland](#)
 - [Creating rural attractions](#)
 - [Festivals](#)
 - [Queer pleasure: masculinity, male homosexuality and public space](#)
 - [Regional cinema](#)
 - [Schoolies week: a festival of misrule](#)
 - [The sporting landscape](#)
 - [Visiting the Great Barrier Reef](#)

[Home](#) » [Division](#) » [Conflict](#)

Skyrail Cairns

By:

Rosita Henry

During 1993 and 1994 the Cairns to Kuranda Skyrail became a hot political issue in North Queensland. The responses of the local community to the construction of this passenger cable car through the Barron Falls National Park and the newly listed Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, were varied but quickly became polarised as being either for or against the project. The Skyrail became a heated topic of debate in both the private and public domains, in the homes of local people, in the cafes and bars and other meeting places, eventually spilling out into the streets in the form of demonstrations, and into the rainforest itself in the form of the blockade and direct action by some of the protesters. Developers proposed the construction of a 7.5 km long cableway in the rainforest from Caravonica to Kuranda called Skyrail, the first commercial development in a World Heritage listed area.

The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park was born during a period of political unrest in Kuranda over the construction of the Kuranda Skyrail. Djabugay people joined forces with environmentalists over the issue of damage to rainforest and the granting of leases by the government in the National Park. A Native Title application was lodged and Aboriginal people joined protest marches and a blockade in direct action against Skyrail.

After the implementation of some construction compromises, the Skyrail opened to the public in August 1995.

Further reading:

Rosita Henry, 'Performing protest, articulating difference: environmentalists, Aborigines and the Kuranda Skyrail dispute', *Aboriginal history*, 1988

Keywords:

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