

STATE LIBRARY OF QUEENSLAND

FIRST NATIONS RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGY 2023-2025





State Library of Queensland's journey

by Chern'ee Sutton, contemporary artist of the Kalkadoon people.

This painting is my interpretation of State Library's commitment to strong relationships, stories, culture, truth and healing with Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The large community symbol in the centre represents the library as a place of knowledge and experiences where all peoples can gather to learn and share stories. It is painted in colours representing First Nations peoples. The books represent the knowledge and history stored within the library.

The large grey ring surrounding the centre represents the past, with the weaving mat leading from this circle symbolising how each strand weaves together the past and the present to create inclusive stories. The inner ring represents the stories from non-Indigenous perspectives, with the outer ring representing the decolonisation of history and stories from First Nations peoples' perspectives. It represents truth telling, language revival, traditional knowledge and culture, and an ancient history that is older than any book or recording.

The larger grey icons represent the traditional ways history was recorded and shared through the generations – music, song and dance, oral history passed down from elders, the landscape and the night sky and rock art. The red and yellow circles and lines connected to the centre represent technology which is our modern method of knowledge keeping, visibility and sharing stories and practices.

The smaller community symbols and travelling lines represent the library's continued commitment to partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, ensuring ancient knowledge and culture, as well as recent history, perspectives and languages can be shared through First Nations voices.

The waterholes, mountains and leaves at the edges represent healing country. It also represents the many regions where people live and travel from to access knowledge — from the desert to the bush, to the coastlines and waterways. The large bottle tree in the top left represents growing knowledge, its roots are the strong foundations and history of Australia's First Peoples. The leaves grow, multiply and spread as knowledge is passed on to future generations. The blue lines represent Maiwar where State Library is located.

The boomerang in the bottom left represents people continually returning to seek more knowledge, both ancient and modern. The shield in the top right represents cultural safety at the heart of the library's identity and protecting knowledge for all peoples. The kangaroo, emu and people footprints symbolise a collaborative nation moving forwards and never backwards.

IMAGE CREDITS

COVER: Sharing stories in the Talking Circle. Photo by Lewis James Media. **PAGE 3:** Staff member at reference library information desk. Photo by Joe Ruckli. **PAGE 5:** Librarian having a yarn about collection items with colleagues. Photo by Joe Ruckli. **PAGE 6:** Welcome Desk assistant providing information. Photo by Joe Ruckli. **PAGE 7:** Browsing collection items in the John Oxley Library. Photo by Joe Ruckli. **PAGE 8:** black&write! team working in kuril dhagun. Photo by Joe Ruckli. **PAGE 9:** Troy Agombar. Photo by Joe Ruckli. **PAGE 10:** Davina Tilberoo. Photo by Joe Ruckli. **PAGE 13:** Nathan Williams. Photo by Brian Cassey. **PAGE 14:** Tania Schafer. Photo by Joe Ruckli. **PAGE 17:** Jade Johnson. Photo by Joe Ruckli. **PAGE 19:** Above: Workshop at the *Entwined* opening weekend. Photo by Attila Csaszar. Below: Colleagues having a yarn in the Cairns office. Photo by Brian Cassey. **PAGE 20:** Colleagues spending time together in kuril dhagun. Photo by Joe Ruckli. **PAGE 21:** Colleagues working in the Cairns office. Photo by Brian Cassey. **PAGE 22-23:** State Library of Queensland's Journey by Chern'ee Sutton.

A photograph of two women standing at a wooden library counter. The woman on the left, with long wavy brown hair, is wearing a black blazer over a black shirt and is smiling. The woman on the right, with long dark hair, is wearing a yellow patterned long-sleeved top and a red skirt, and is holding a book. On the counter, there are several small flags (Australian, Torres Strait Islander, and others), a red telephone, and some books. In the background, a sign reads "Information Databases".

Information Databases

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

State Library of Queensland acknowledges the traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owners of Country throughout Queensland, their ongoing connection to this land and water, and pay our respects to their cultures and their Elders past, present and future.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination is a human right enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and in the Queensland Human Rights Act 2019. We are committed to strengthening and sustaining partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities that will contribute to growing a strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and delivering quality services.



STATE LIBRARIAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER MESSAGE

As custodians of Queensland's memory, we are committed to sharing the full, unabridged history of the state and the advancement of healing and understanding between First Nations and non-Indigenous Queenslanders.

The recruitment and retention of First Nations people is pivotal to our ongoing ambition, and it contributes to a shared future for all Queenslanders. Recruiting and retaining First Nations staff is crucial for State Library of Queensland, the wider cultural sector and the nation itself.

This strategy builds on our work and commitment to First Nations Queenslanders over many decades. We will continue to improve our work practices, programs, activities and policies to ensure the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and perspectives.

Our partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island councils is a proud part of our history as a cultural institution. Over the past 20 years we have worked with councils and communities to create a thriving network of Indigenous Knowledge Centres that support language revitalisation and document local histories. These vital community hubs promote truth-telling and elevate First Nations voices and storytelling.

We also ensure State Library's extensive collections include photographs, oral histories, publications, manuscripts and recordings that represent the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland. The rights of First Nations people to access and engage with their cultural heritage underpins how State Library collects, manages and makes accessible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collections.

The achievement of the guiding principles, and focus areas outlined in this strategy will require the commitment of all people leaders and our broader workforce. It is an important opportunity during a time of historic change.

This strategy was approved by the Library Board of Queensland on 29 November 2022. I thank all colleagues, particularly the First Nations people on our team, who have developed this strategy.

Vicki McDonald AM FALIA
State Librarian and Chief Executive Officer







INTRODUCTION

The First Nations Recruitment and Retention Strategy (the Strategy) outlines State Library's commitment to growing and nurturing a thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.

The Strategy will position State Library as an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, by creating exciting career opportunities and creating a culturally vibrant and safe place to work. The Strategy contributes to the delivery of the Queensland Government's priorities for arts, culture and creativity as outlined in the *Creative Together 2020-2030: A 10-Year Roadmap for arts, culture and creativity in Queensland*.

The Strategy is informed by feedback from State Library's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and a review of best practice recruitment and retention strategies. The Strategy contributes to the Queensland Government commitment to fostering a culture of inclusion, cultural safety, careers, and leadership for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It enables a process for truth-telling, healing, self-determination, and ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures are at the centre of everything we do.

Implementation of the Strategy will occur in tandem with State Library's Strategic Workforce Plan 2021-25. State Library is committed to becoming a leader and innovator of change in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment and retention across the library and cultural sectors. Success requires leadership across all levels and areas of State Library, and sustained commitment to collaborate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

The Strategy will be activated through key actions in the First Nations' Recruitment and Retention Action Plan. Monitoring and assurance of the Strategy's implementation will be through reporting to State Library Executive and Library Board.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Strategy is underpinned by 5 guiding principles:

Human rights – We are committed to embedding human rights in everything that we do, by putting people first in all our actions, decisions and interactions. We support self-determination initiatives which honour the norms set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Self determination – The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples describes self-determination as the ability for Indigenous peoples to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development. State Library respects the right to free, prior and informed consent and individual choice. We will prioritise people, and place-based solutions, and the transfer of decision-making power to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in areas that impact their lives and communities.

Cultural safety – We are committed to a culturally safe and inclusive workplace, building cultural intelligence, safety and security within our workforce. We also recognise the importance of the rich cultural heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in all aspects of the organisation is fundamental to the cultural wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

Engagement and partnerships – We will build strong and sustainable partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations, which are based on leadership, inclusion and co-designing programs where program delivery is underpinned by self-determination.

Respect and inclusion – Our workplace will be free from racism, where all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees are treated with respect. We recognise and value the perspectives, lived experiences and knowledge of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.







DAVINA TILBEROO

My name is Davina, and I am a proud descendant of the Birri Gubba, Yetimarala and Gunggandji tribe.

I grew up in Central Queensland and moved to Woorabinda to finish high school.

I undertook a traineeship as part of my first job and my grandmother suggested working at Woorabinda Council in 2018. I initially did work in the day care centre and radio which was run by Council, and I became involved with the Indigenous Knowledge Centre (IKC) and reconnected with Uncle Douglas Graham (Timboy). Uncle Timboy was an Elder who I met previously when I first moved back to Woorabinda. He was very patient with me and inspired me to try new things including becoming more involved in community activities.

He got me involved in the Taroom to Woorabinda Anniversary Walk which retraces our ancestors' steps and experiences when they were forced to walk from Taroom to Woorabinda. The walk was over 200 kilometres in 8 days — it inspired me to become active and engaged with the community.

At this time, I learnt more about IKCs in terms of the systems, computers, books, and history and working with young children as part of the First 5 Forever program. I also did some training on the use of computers to help get COVID-19 restrictions updates out to the community. I worked with Uncle Timboy to set up Facebook community notice updates and I also managed Facebook posts on the IKC Facebook pages.

Uncle Timboy and my grandmother suggested that I investigate other career options using the skills that I learnt at the IKC. I applied for a role at State Library of Queensland while also moving to Brisbane.

I first started working in kuril dhagun at State Library as an Administration Assistant in May 2021 and became a full-time permanent employee in July 2022. Since joining State Library, I have been heavily supported in learning new business skills, managing enquiries and communicating with the public.

I have also had assistance from my team leader to manage timelines and workload, and my colleague Jennifer has helped me on how to approach and complete different tasks each day.

In the future, I would like to improve my communication and written skills and I would also like to work with animals, either as part of my job or on a volunteer basis.



NATHAN WILLIAMS

On my father's side, I have family links to the Tag Clan from Ugar (Stephen Island) in the Torres Strait.

On my mother's side, I have family connections to the Guugu Yimithirr people at Battle Camp, Laura in Cape York.

I was born and grew up in Cairns and was close with my family, especially my cousins.

Growing up, I felt it was important to know about my family and our family connections and would often share our connections with other family members.

As the youngest of 6 children, my parents and older siblings were my biggest influences, especially with my brother who encouraged me to pursue further education which led me to obtain a bachelor's degree in journalism.

My passion is storytelling, and this was the biggest reason why I became a journalist specialising in radio broadcasting and I feel this fits in well with my work with State Library of Queensland.

Currently, I am a Program Officer with Indigenous Services, State Library, based in Cairns and my portfolio of communities includes Pormpuraaw, Napranum, Aurukun and Mapoon, supporting their Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs).

I have been with State Library since June 2018 and I have been blessed to have refurbished, relocated and established 3 different IKCs in the Western Cape.

My other passion outside of State Library, includes being the Secretary on the Cairns NAIDOC Week Committee. We organise various events in Cairns during NAIDOC Week each year. I have been on the committee for more than 15 years and celebrations in Cairns get bigger each year.

I am also a Director with Access Community Housing Company (ACHC), providing affordable housing to people in Cairns. I believe it is important to provide suitable and affordable housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Cairns.

In the future, I would like to see more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people improving their education standards, being prouder of their family heritage, and having a stronger connection to language and Country.

I believe that State Library has an important role in contributing to this future vision.







TANIA SCHAFER

My name is Tania Schafer. I am a proud Mununjali, on my father's side, and Bundjalung, on my mother's side, woman. I am a qualified Librarian and Archivist and have tertiary qualifications in early childhood teaching.

I work as the Collection Engagement Librarian in Queensland Memory and I am the expert on Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander library collections and Indigenous library issues.

I have been given the opportunity to observe, strategise and progress Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander library issues during my 30-year career. I have worked on many First Nations initiatives such as the Norman Tindale and Margaret Lawrie Indigenous collections, opening of the First Indigenous Knowledge Centre, creating the first Indigenous Flickr Commons albums and initiating a strong online presence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander information.

I have spent my life living in the shadow of great family role models. I became a jack-of-all-trades due to my obligations to my people and culture, because I was lucky to be raised in a loving Aboriginal family environment with my sisters Luana, Shauna and Janna.

My family encouraged me to learn the unique hidden stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from pre-history to contemporary times. They instilled within me an underlying dignity to never give up, even in a losing battle. They taught me that it is not about fearing the fall after being hit but understanding the emotional trauma of never trying to stand up to take another punch for your cultural beliefs. Progression never occurs for Indigenous Australians without protest or punishment.

It is my personal dreaming to leave a legacy of change and improvement through the development of the Queensland Public Service values of encouraging creativity, diversity, accountability and collaboration and progression. I embrace the Path to Treaty theme of truth telling by providing equitable access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories via new technology in State Library.

I want to assist all Queenslanders by giving them confidence in accessing personal and relevant First Nations information held at State Library in accordance with the library's vision and enduring values.

JADE JOHNSON

I am Wierdi kaiyu (woman) of the Birri Gubba Nation of Wribpid (central Queensland) with tribal connections through the Gulf of Carpentaria and Cape York and colonisation connections to Cherbourg, Palm Island and Purga.

I am from Zillmere on Brisbane's northside and through my family's involvement, I grew up in the Brisbane Blacks organisations that surrounded State Library of Queensland's current location, such as Born Free Club, Queensland Indigenous Artist Aboriginal Corp, Murri Mura, Hope Street and Musgrave Park Corp. My grandparents, Bowman and Edith Johnson, still have hostels named after them in the local area today.

Growing up within Aboriginal organisations, and seeing my mother, grandparents, uncles and aunties dedicate their life to the advancement of our mob, naturally led me on a path working for community. Firstly, setting up organisations and working in a variety of organisations and arts spaces including a role as junior curator of The Original Aboriginal Art Co. (TOAAC) before joining the public service at Centrelink.

As a child I was a traditional dancer with many dance groups. Learning the songs and dances gave me great pride in my identity and led me to tour internationally. During this time, I met my extended First Nations families in Canada and the United States experiencing life on reservations. Being surrounded by First Nations culture and businesses further ignited my desire to build my career around my people and about how my experiences could be returned to community.

Moving to Canberra I returned to the public service working at Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) in the development of community-based leadership and project delivery surrounding the National Apology to the Stolen Generation by the former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. I moved back to Queensland and worked at the Australian Tax Office before becoming CEO of Wiri Yuwiburra Community Benefits Trust, working to improve the cultural, educational and economic outcomes for my mob.

I then came to kuril dhagun at State Library after developing relationships with former staff and other First Nations staff across the cultural precinct. I decided to apply for a position as Program Officer with kuril dhagun. Now, 4 years later, I have advanced to the role of Lead, kuril dhagun. As a mother of young girls, I felt returning to the public service in a position about culture and mob was most beneficial for my family. Even today my daughters are often onsite helping out with community events in the kuril dhagun space, bringing Elders a cuppa.

As Lead, my motto is to 'get it done but let's make it fun, be your authentic beautiful black selves'. We are a team of fun and creative First Nations staff who enjoy each other's yarns and laughs, supporting each other to deliver programs and services focused on mob.



FOCUS AREAS

The Strategy responds to current evidence around best practice in recruitment and retention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and focuses on attracting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to State Library and providing rich and meaningful career development opportunities. The Strategy has 4 focus areas:

1. Embed cultural capability
2. Enhance attraction and recruitment
3. Retention through sustainable and innovative career opportunities
4. Leadership at all levels

1. EMBED CULTURAL CAPABILITY

Cultural safety defines an environment that is safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to live and work where there is no assault, challenge, or denial of their identity and experience.

We are committed to ensuring a culturally safe and inclusive workplace for all employees. Creating an environment based on a foundation of cultural safety at all levels of the organisation is fundamental to the cultural wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

State Library acknowledges that there are structural and systemic issues in public institutions and collections that require ongoing review and improvement including issues of racism, lack of employment, the need for truth-telling and further education.

We will build the cultural capability of all employees, through training and immersion opportunities, recognising the expertise and contribution that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees bring to State Library.

All State Library executives and people leaders are responsible for prioritising and embedding cultural safety as part of our ongoing learning and development for all employees.

2. ENHANCE ATTRACTION AND RECRUITMENT

Our focus is to build meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities to attract and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. We will do this by enhancing our current attraction and recruitment processes through job design; increasing visibility and branding; panel upskilling; and building our profile as an employer of choice in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

State Library is committed to developing a range of employment pathways by building new partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, businesses, universities, schools and employment providers to support and promote attraction and recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander talent.



3. RETENTION THROUGH SUSTAINABLE AND INNOVATIVE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

State Library is committed to providing rich, sustainable and innovative career opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, and development and progression at all levels and across all teams.

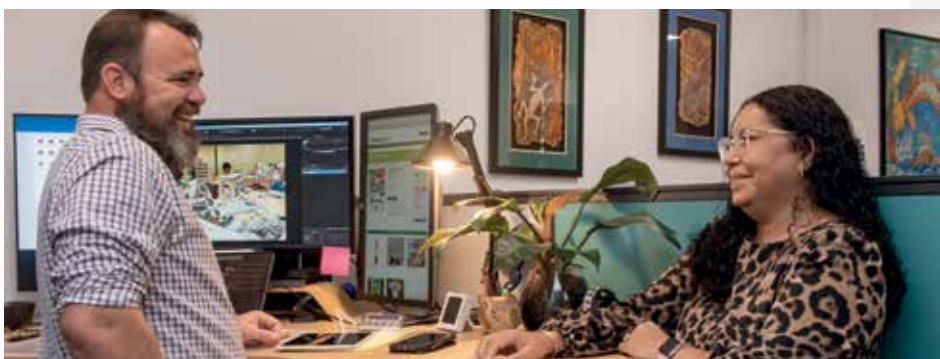
We are focused on supporting all employees to achieve their professional aspirations, and contribute to State Library's strategic commitments. State Library is committed to understanding and valuing diversity of lived and practical experiences that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees bring to our workplace.

4. LEADERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS

Executive leadership, accountability and monitoring of the Strategy's implementation are critical to the success of the Strategy. Leadership plays an essential role in owning and driving the success of the Strategy, including the ongoing monitoring, evaluation and reporting of its implementation.

People leaders are responsible for enhancing the wellbeing, culturally safe supervision and career development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

Monitoring and assurance of the implementation of the Strategy will be provided by reporting to State Library Executive and Library Board.



ACTIVATING THE STRATEGY

The First Nations Recruitment and Retention Strategy will be activated by annual action plans. We will focus on creating a work environment that embeds cultural safety, enhances partnerships and improves our workforce processes. We will deliver specific actions to:

- Continue to build the cultural capability of our workforce through learning and development opportunities, with a particular focus on developing the capability of people leaders.
- Review recruitment and retention practices to ensure a positive and culturally safe experience for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Embed cultural safety through inclusive and accountable leadership by enhancing wellbeing, providing culturally safe leadership and development opportunities.



1. FOCUS AREA – EMBED CULTURAL CAPABILITY

- Build cultural capability of our people leaders.
- Build cultural capability of all State Library employees

2. FOCUS AREA – ENHANCE ATTRACTION AND RECRUITMENT

- Improve retention rates and increase representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across all portfolios at all levels of State Library.
- Develop a toolkit for hiring managers to ensure culturally safe and contemporary recruitment practices.
- Leverage existing Queensland government career programs and employment pathways.

3. FOCUS AREA – RETENTION THROUGH SUSTAINABLE AND INNOVATIVE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

- Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to participate in a First Nations-led mentoring program.
- Promotion of professional development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.
- Encourage participation in formal and informal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks.

4. FOCUS AREA – LEADERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS

- Deliver Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce reporting to the Executive Team.
- Embed specific actions in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural capability in Personal Performance Plans.









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