

STATE LIBRARY OF QUEENSLAND

MEDIA RELEASE

Rainbows and kookaburras: Neon exhibition lights up Queensland

Classic neon signs, including Stefan's iconic rainbow, will be on display at State Library of Queensland from 6 December just in time for summer.

Neon will illuminate the history of the noble gas turned marketing tool in Queensland from the 1940s to today, including the artisans who transformed glass bending into an art form.

The free exhibition will include original and restored neon works that tell an unexplored story of our state, from the winking Mr Fourex to legendary cafes and entertainment venues.

While these illuminated treasures were once a symbol of urban life and culture, many were destroyed when buildings were demolished or renovated.

Collectors began rescuing these signs to help preserve the history of the buildings and businesses they adorned.

Curator tours, hands-on workshops and film screenings will be held at State Library over summer to celebrate the glitz and glamour of this unique art form.

Exhibition highlights include:

- Stefan's rainbow and Jo-Jo's cafe neon signs (including original sketches for the signs)
- The original Kookaburra Cafe neon signs
- A replica Mr Fourex sign, made from materials gathered from the old Regatta Hotel
- The Playroom sign (legendary Gold Coast venue)
- Rare footage and photographs of neon's history
- Original sketches and designs for some of Queensland's visual icons

Quotes from Minister for Education and the Arts John-Paul Langbroek:

"From commercial signage to modern art, the luminous glow of neon has held its appeal over many decades and now this free exhibition at State Library of Queensland invites us to engage more closely with the art form and the artisans who work with it.

"With school holidays approaching, *Neon* offers a wonderful opportunity for families and visitors of all ages to spend some time exploring a fascinating aspect of our state's contemporary cultural and social history.

"The Queensland Government invests in the State Library of Queensland to collect and share our cultural heritage with all Queenslanders and visitors to the state."

Media enquiries

State Library Communications team
media@slq.qld.gov.au
(07) 3840 7897

Interviews are available upon request.

Quotes from State Librarian and CEO Vicki McDonald AM:

“Neon signs are an evocative part of Queensland's social history.

“They have also come to symbolise the march of consumerism in society and the expansion of urban life. Both remain the subject of much debate as we continue to consider how we live and what we value.

“This free exhibition also illuminates State Library's key role in preserving and sharing Queensland's unique history.”

Neon exhibition

6 December 2024 – 9 February 2025

Open daily 10am–5pm | Free entry

slq Gallery, level 2 | State Library of Queensland, Cultural Centre, South Bank

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