

STATE LIBRARY QUEENSLAND

MEDIA RELEASE

25 October 2025

Pioneering Torres Strait Islander artist celebrated at State Library

A powerful exhibition honouring the late Torres Strait Islander artist Billy Missi (1970–2012) opens at State Library of Queensland today.

Billy Missi'n Wakain Thamai brings together 26 of the artist's most significant and iconic artworks, including rare and never-before-exhibited monoprints, etchings, and linoprints.

The bilingual retrospective honours the artistic legacy of Missi, a prominent figure in the establishment of the Torres Strait Island printmaking movement.

Curated by Dr Russell Milledge, it was developed in close consultation with the Billy Missi Estate, family members and friends, highlighting Missi's critical role in the emergence of Zenadth Kes (Torres Strait) printmaking as a contemporary art form.

Highlights include:

- rare works
- bilingual labels and audio tours, in English and Kala Lagaw Ya: traditional language of the Western and Central Islands of the Torres Strait
- a film presenting an immersive experience into contemporary Torres Strait Islander culture and customs

Billy Missi was born on Mabuiag Island and was deeply influenced by the storytelling, song, and dance traditions of his Wagadagam Tribe. Beginning in earnest in the 1990s, his artistic journey combined traditional carving techniques with modern linocut methods, creating a unique aesthetic that earned international recognition before his passing in 2012.

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

"Billy Missi'n Wakain Thamai celebrates the extraordinary talent of prolific Queensland artist and cultural custodian, Billy Missi who was part of a contemporary generation of respected and influential Torres Strait Islander artists.

"Billy Missi and his artistic legacy are shared with Queenslanders and visitors to the state in this exciting exhibition that celebrates his work, innovative printmaking techniques and the stories, arts and cultures of Torres Strait Islander people.

The Crisafulli Government proudly supports State Library of Queensland to share the state's important stories and engage communities and visitors across the state, delivering on the *Queensland's Time to Shine* 10-year strategy for arts and culture.

Quotes from State Librarian and CEO Vicki McDonald AM:

"Billy Missi'n Wakain Thamai offers fascinating and important insights into one of Australia's most influential Torres Strait Islander artists.

"Visitors will gain a deep appreciation for Missi's work, reflecting his way of life, traditions, and enduring legacy.

"This free exhibition celebrates First Nations knowledge and culture, showcasing the rich diversity of Queensland's people and communities."

Billy Missi'n Wakain Thamai is an exhibition developed by NorthSite Contemporary Arts (Gimuy/Cairns) and touring Australia in partnership with Gab Titui Cultural Centre/Torres Strait Regional Authority (Waiben/Thursday Island) and Museums & Galleries Queensland.

This project has been assisted by the Australian Government's Visions of Australia program.

Billy Missi'n Wakain Thamai

25 October 2025 – 22 February 2026

Open daily 10am–5pm | Free entry

kuril dhagun, Level 1 | State Library of Queensland, Cultural Centre, South Bank

slq.qld.gov.au/discover/exhibitions/billy-missin-wakain-thamai | [media kit](#)

Media enquiries

media@slq.qld.gov.au

(07) 3840 7897

Interviews available on request.

Presented by



Touring Partners



TSRA
www.tsra.gov.au



Australian Government
Visions of Australia

NorthSite Funding Partners



Queensland
Government



Australian Government

