

STATE LIBRARY OF QUEENSLAND

MEDIA RELEASE

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Aboriginal stockmen and stockwomen stories told in State Library showcase

The stories of Aboriginal stockmen and stockwomen and their contribution to Australia are explored in a new State Library of Queensland showcase from 24 June.

Working Country pays tribute to Aboriginal stockmen and women, past and present, whose skill, knowledge and deeply rooted connection to Country earned them a reputation as expert pastoralists.

The showcase delves into stolen wages and the exploitation of Aboriginal peoples who worked on the land, as well as the fight for civil rights and Wik stockman John Koowarta's battle for land rights on Cape York.

A series of photographic portraits of Aboriginal women who lived and worked on Far North Queensland cattle stations will also be on display.

Photographer David Prichard won the prestigious Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize in 2021 for his portraiture of the women, which has since been acquired by State Library.

Other *Working Country* highlights include:

- The role of Aboriginal dreaming trade routes in the making of pastoral industry stock routes
- Aboriginal-run cattle station, profiling Delta Downs station
- Historical images of Aboriginal women impersonating stockmen to evade gender laws
- Aboriginal-run rodeos in Queensland Aboriginal communities
- Profiles: Charlie Flannigan, artist, drover and award-winning jockey; Uncle Herb Wharton AM, renowned stockman, author, and artist.

Quotes from Minister for the Arts Leeanne Enoch:

"The *Working Country* exhibition honours Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stockmen and stockwomen and acknowledges their significant contribution to Queensland's agricultural industry.

"This important exhibition shares the stories of First Nations peoples in Queensland who, despite incredible hardship, including indentured servitude, worked on Country to survive and remain connected to Country.

"At a time when Queensland is progressing a Path to Treaty and an inclusive tomorrow, this exhibition shares the truths of our past including the state's history of exploiting the knowledge and labour of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and I commend State Library of Queensland for sharing this respectful and engaging exhibition that shares powerful stories."

Quotes from State Librarian and CEO Vicki McDonald AM:

"*Working Country* brings to light stories of Aboriginal stockmen and women who were pivotal in Queensland's pastoral industry. Their knowledge of Country and excellent horsemanship were highly sought-after skills for working on the land.



Queensland
Government

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Interviews are available upon request.

“However, there are some uncomfortable truths revealed about the treatment of Aboriginal peoples who spent their working lives on stations. State Library is deeply committed to respectful processes of truth telling as we move towards a Path to Treaty.

“*Working Country* is told through a First Nations perspective, recognising the strength and resilience of Australia’s First Peoples.”

Working Country

24 June – 28 January 2024

Open daily | Free entry

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