

INTRODUCTION

VISION, PURPOSE AND ENDURING VALUES

OUR VISION

A library of influence, inspiring and connecting people through knowledge, storytelling and creativity.

OUR PURPOSE

State Library collects and preserves Queensland's cultural and documentary memory, providing free access to information, fostering knowledge and learning. We partner with local government to realise the potential of public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres.

ENDURING VALUES

Access is free and equitable.

We serve people everywhere in Queensland, onsite and online.

Diversity is celebrated.

We seek and share the diverse stories of Queenslanders.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their knowledge, strength and resilience are centred.

We are committed to respectful processes in our work.

Our workplace is safe and purposeful.

We respect the expertise of our people.

The leading reference and research library in Queensland, State Library is also a cultural destination with engaging exhibitions, events and programs. Through collecting and preserving Queensland's cultural, intellectual and social life in historic and contemporary collections, it is building a trusted record for the people of Queensland. The collections – and the people and communities they represent – inform programming, public engagement and partnerships. We embrace diversity, and provide free and equitable access to information so people can thrive through connection, learning, storytelling and innovation.

State Library partners with local governments to support the delivery of library services statewide. There are more than 325 public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres in Queensland. Based at South Bank (Brisbane), with offices at Cannon Hill (Brisbane) and in Cairns, State Library is governed by the Library Board of Queensland.

Queensland Library Foundation raises funds to support collections, programs and services.

State Library provides exhibition content, learning materials, visitor services and marketing for Anzac Square Memorial Galleries. The services are provided under an operating agreement with Queensland Veterans' Council (QVC). City Parklands Services provides facilities maintenance for the galleries and Anzac Square parklands.

Our role includes:

- collecting and preserving a trusted record of Queensland
- providing free access to information
- encouraging research to deepen the knowledge of Queensland's past and present
- recognising the unique knowledge and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and working with communities to share their history and cultures
- interpreting Queensland stories through exhibitions, events, discussion and debate
- developing an inclusive library service, addressing diverse needs, strengthening opportunities for the expression of ideas and fostering the appreciation of difference
- providing access to collections and services in a range of formats and channels so they are available to all, regardless of geographical location
- advocating for public libraries and partnering with local government to provide Queenslanders with opportunities to participate fully in the economic, social, political and cultural dimensions of society.

As a member of National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA), State Library influences and supports NSLA's *Strategic Plan 2023–26: Leading together*, as well as working with the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) to advocate for library services.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR, LIBRARY BOARD OF QUEENSLAND

The past year has been a time of change and renewal for State Library of Queensland, as it seeks to advance its mission of providing excellence in its service to Queenslanders through its many and diverse activities and functions as one of the state's leading cultural institutions.

Earlier this year, the Queensland Government refreshed the Board by the appointment of new directors, who bring to the governance of the Library a wide range of experience from both the private and public sector – and, just as importantly, fresh perspectives on how our mission is best delivered. All institutions benefit from periodic renewal and fresh thinking; the Library is no different. At the same time, continuity was maintained by the reappointment of Courtney Talbot, who became the Deputy Chair. I was honoured to be appointed as Chair of the new Board.

I take this opportunity to express my thanks to the outgoing Chair, Debbie Best (who served in that capacity for the last 4 years), and the other retiring Board members, for their service.

The past year was also the last during which Vicki McDonald AM served in the role of State Librarian and CEO. After a decade leading the Library, Vicki accepted an offer to become the CEO of State Library Victoria – a most prestigious appointment, which bespeaks the esteem in which she is held nationally as one of the leaders in her profession. She will be sorely missed.

The recruitment of Vicki's replacement has begun; in the meantime, Scott Martin, a senior Executive Director of Arts Queensland, is acting in the role. We expect the recruitment process to be completed by Christmas and a new Librarian to be in place early in 2027. While all of us – and in particular the many staff with whom she has worked for many years – were sad to see Vicki leave, the transition has been seamless.

The Library's activities during the past year are set out in this report. The impressive range, variety and ambition of those activities speak for themselves.

One particular issue with which the new Board has had to deal is the response to and implementation of an independent review by the Honourable Martin Daubney AM KC into how the Library best fulfils its function in facilitating the contest of ideas – in particular, through its awards, fellowships and as a provider of venues. At a time of growing national concern about social cohesion, a public institution such as the Library must be careful to strike the right balance between protecting freedom of expression and guarding itself against being used as a platform for attacks on vulnerable citizens. The evidence given to the Royal Commission into antisemitism, which has shocked the nation, reminds us just how careful we must be to protect the fragility of our liberal democracy. Cultural institutions have a particularly important role to play.

The Board was particularly mindful of those considerations in adopting the recommendations of the Daubney Review. An implementation plan is currently being finalised.

The Board enjoys an excellent relationship with our Minister, the Minister for Education and the Arts the Honourable John-Paul Langbroek MP and his office; and with Arts Queensland, in particular its Deputy Director-General Kirsten Herring. I thank them both and look forward to working with them in the years ahead.

I extend my sincere thanks to my fellow Board members, past and present, the Queensland Library Foundation councillors, and all those who contribute through the Library's committees and advisory groups, for the insight and energy they bring to their work.

In particular, I extend my thanks to the Library's many individual and corporate supporters who, through their generosity and public spiritedness, provide the philanthropic support so important to the Library's success in delivering its mission.



Hon George Brandis KC
Chair
Library Board of Queensland

MESSAGE FROM THE STATE LIBRARIAN AND CEO

Major milestones, new partnerships and powerful stories marked a year of momentum for State Library, bringing Queenslanders together to learn, create, remember and imagine.

Engagement continued to grow, with State Library welcoming 1.8 million onsite visits and recording 5.6 million online sessions, reflecting the important role of a contemporary library in both physical and digital spaces.

This year marked the beginning of an important new partnership with artisan, Queensland's peak body for craft and design. Together, we created a new hub for the state's makers, fostering collaboration, professional development and new opportunities for emerging and established practitioners across Queensland.

We celebrated the reopening of The Corner following a \$3.6 million redevelopment funded by our generous donors and the Queensland Government. The transformed space provides expanded opportunities for children and families to learn through play, creativity and exploration, connecting with our popular First 5 Forever initiative. A fun day of family activities during Under Eights Week gave our youngest Queenslanders the chance to explore the new space.

Our exhibitions showcased the richness of Queensland's stories and collections. *Dearly Departed: death in life* drew on State Library's holdings to explore memory, ritual and remembrance, while *Driven: every car has a story* connected audiences with Queensland's social history through historic motoring memorabilia, rare home movies, art and family activities.

Preserving Queensland's heritage for future generations remains central to our work. RSL Queensland donated its historically significant archive, including records of closed sub-branches and the Girl in a Million fundraising campaign. This builds on last year's digitisation of the past century of the organisation's magazines.

State Library proudly elevated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories and perspectives through 3 exhibitions in kuril dhagun. *Through Mununjali Eyes: photojournalist Wayne Coolwell* honoured the life and legacy of the late Wayne Coolwell, presenting a powerful visual record of Aboriginal political, social and cultural life spanning more than 5 decades. *Billy Missi'n Wakain Thamai* celebrated the artistic legacy of the late Torres Strait Islander artist Billy Missi, while *Culture Love* highlighted the creativity of young people from Indigenous Knowledge Centres across remote Queensland.

Collaboration with our partners continued to connect audiences with stories that reflect the diversity of our communities. Our partnership with Brisbane Portrait Prize continued to celebrate the people and stories of Brisbane through contemporary portraiture. In preparation for the Brisbane Exhibition 150th anniversary in 2026, State Library partnered with ABC Brisbane and the Royal National Agricultural and Industrial Association of Queensland (RNA) on a public activation during the 2025 show, encouraging Queenslanders to share their Ekka memories.

Supporting public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres across Queensland remains a core responsibility. On behalf of the Queensland Government, State Library administered \$32.7 million in public library and First 5 Forever funding, helping strengthen library services and community engagement. In March, we convened a roundtable with library partners, with a focus on sustainability, to inform a revised funding methodology. The roundtable gave us valuable insight into how we can best support libraries as they continue to adapt and thrive in the years ahead.

I would like to acknowledge our new Chair of the Library Board of Queensland, George Brandis KC, for his leadership during this period of transition and extend my sincere gratitude to past Chair Debbie Best for her stewardship and enduring contribution to State Library.

I thank both incoming and outgoing Library Board members, together with members of the Queensland Library Foundation Council, for their guidance and advocacy, and extend my thanks to our Executive Leadership Team and dedicated staff, whose expertise and passion make our achievements possible.

Finally, I acknowledge the valued support of our donors, partners and the Queensland Government. Together, we ensure State Library remains a place where stories are preserved, creativity is nurtured and communities are strengthened for generations to come.



Ms Vicki McDonald AM FALIA
State Librarian and CEO
State Library of Queensland
28 July 2026

ABOUT THE LIBRARY BOARD OF QUEENSLAND

The Library Board of Queensland (Library Board), established in 1943, is the governing body of State Library of Queensland and draws its powers from the *Libraries Act 1988 (Qld)* (*Libraries Act*). The object of the *Libraries Act* is to contribute to the cultural, social and intellectual development of all Queenslanders.

The legislated guiding principles for achieving this are:

- leadership and excellence should be demonstrated in providing library and information services
- there should be responsiveness to the needs of communities in regional and outer metropolitan areas
- respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures should be affirmed
- children and young people should be supported in their understanding and use of library and information services
- diverse audiences should be developed
- capabilities for lifelong learning about library and information services should be developed
- opportunities should be developed for international collaboration and for cultural exports, especially to the Asia Pacific region
- content relevant to Queensland should be collected, preserved, promoted and made accessible.

The functions and powers of the Library Board are listed on page 46. Biographies of Library Board members are detailed on pages 41–42.

In addition to regular meetings of the Library Board, members represented State Library at official functions throughout 2025–26. One committee and one advisory group advise and inform the Library Board on issues that arise within their brief. These bodies also act as important consultative mechanisms with the broader community. The members of the Library Board committee and advisory groups are listed on pages 44–45.

The Library Board periodically travels outside Brisbane to stay informed about regional issues and to strengthen its relationship with local councils and the community.

Under section 7 of the *Libraries Act*, in appointing a Library Board member, regard must be given to the person's ability to contribute to the Library Board's performance and the implementation of its strategic and operational plans. Under section 12A of the *Libraries Act*, a person is disqualified from becoming or continuing as a member if the person has a conviction, other than a spent conviction, for an indictable offence, is an insolvent under administration or is disqualified from managing corporations because of the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth), Part 2D.6.

There were 9 Library Board meetings in 2025–26. The table in Appendix A outlines all Library Board members, appointment terms, meeting attendance, remuneration and expenses.

Observers

The State Librarian and CEO attends all meetings of the Library Board as an observer unless excused or precluded by the Library Board as per section 15 of the *Libraries Act*.

Ms Vicki McDonald AM FALIA, State Librarian and CEO,
State Library of Queensland

Ms Kirsten Herring, Deputy Director-General,
Arts Queensland, Department of Education

Secretariat

Ms Jennifer Genrich, Manager, Strategy and Governance,
State Library of Queensland

QUEENSLAND LIBRARY FOUNDATION

Generous support from donors, sponsors and grantors through Queensland Library Foundation (the Foundation) is fundamental to the delivery and impact of State Library's programs and initiatives. In 2025–26, this included Transforming The Corner campaign donations, exhibition corporate partnerships, and grants for major early childhood development initiatives. Investment was also directed to priorities such as preservation and digitisation, fellowships and medals, and schools engagement programs.

Donor engagement

The Foundation hosted a targeted program of engagement activities throughout the year, strengthening connections between donors and State Library's collections and programs. This included tailored opportunities for supporters to gain deeper insight into priority initiatives and major projects, as well as invitations to key State Library events and exhibitions. Donors were welcomed to a series of exclusive morning teas held in conjunction with the popular Heritage talks program, providing unique access to Queensland's history, State Library collections and opportunities to connect with fellow supporters. Dedicated tours of The Corner offered donors a closer understanding of the outcomes of the major fundraising campaign, complemented by a donor thank you morning tea recognising the contributions of supporters and celebrating the impact of their philanthropy. Stewardship of the sponsorship for the summer exhibition *Driven: every car has a story* also formed an important part of the Foundation's engagement activities.

Queensland Literary Awards

The Queensland Literary Awards, presented in September in partnership with the Queensland Government, celebrated the achievements of outstanding Australian authors and the strength of the Queensland and national literary community. The awards continued to be supported through a combination of philanthropy and sponsorship. The Foundation gratefully acknowledges the contributions of The University of Queensland (UQ), University of Queensland Press (UQP), Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund, *The Courier-Mail*, Jenny Summerson, Susan Hocking and Ian Mackie and their family, and the Talbot Foundation. Their support has been instrumental in sustaining the awards and their legacy of recognising excellence in Australian writing.

State Library Fellowships and Medals

The State Library Fellowships and Medals (formerly Queensland Memory Awards) recognise significant contributions to the research, preservation and celebration of Queensland's history and cultural memory. The program supports researchers, creatives, historians and writers to engage with the collections of the John Oxley Library, generating new knowledge and uncovering diverse stories. In 2025–26, the Foundation's President's Circle donors continued to fund the premier award, the John Oxley Library Fellowship, valued at \$25,000. The Foundation also supported the John Oxley Library Community History Award, valued at \$5,000.

The Foundation gratefully acknowledges the generosity of fellowship donors, including The Siganto Foundation; the John Allpass Charitable Foundation; Lynette Valentine; the Mellick family; Heritage Branch, Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation; and the Royal National Agricultural and Industrial Association of Queensland.

Saving Queensland history

The Colonial Secretary's Correspondence is a rich collection of 19th century documents, offering invaluable insights into Queensland's early history and the people, communities and decisions that shaped the state. This project continues to deepen understanding of Queensland's past, connecting contemporary audiences with these important stories.

In 2025–26, the project reached its final stage, with development of the online interface nearing completion and full delivery projected for 2026–27. This milestone has been made possible through the generosity of donors, building on the leadership gifts of Ken MacDonald AM and Terry White AO and the ongoing support of the wider donor community.

The Reel Rescue campaign also continued its vital work to preserve and digitise at-risk moving image and audio materials.

As key funding priorities for the Foundation, both projects were featured in the 2026 end-of-financial-year appeals, highlighting the urgency and importance of safeguarding Queensland's audio visual and documentary heritage for future generations.

Supporting schools

Foundation donors have supported statewide student learning and wellbeing by enabling the piloting, delivery and expansion of innovative schools engagement programming. Initiatives build the capacity of students and educators, and increase access to onsite collections and resources. Donors supporting projects in 2025–26 included the Ash Barty Foundation, Keith and Caroline Hamilton, and The Siganto Foundation, building on foundational support from Gina Fairfax AC and Tim Fairfax AC.

STRATEGY

GOVERNMENT'S OBJECTIVES FOR THE COMMUNITY

State Library contributes to the Queensland Government's objectives for the community:

A better lifestyle through a stronger economy

- Relieving cost of living pressures through free access to library spaces, collections and services.
- Creating better lifestyles through local government partnerships for libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres which contribute to the liveability of local communities.
- Delivering digital inclusion programs to ensure a stronger economy by expanding opportunities to participate in the digital economy.

A plan for Queensland's future

- Preparing young Queenslanders for the future by creating safe, meaningful and memorable experiences onsite, online, and in libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres.
- Building world-class cultural experiences for Queenslanders and visitors, contributing to the Olympic and Paralympic Games legacy.

State Library plays a lead role in delivering the Queensland Government's arts policy, *Queensland's Time to Shine: a 10-year strategy for arts and culture 2025–2035*.

- Transformational arts and culture for Brisbane 2032 and beyond
- Uniquely Queensland arts experiences
- Maximise opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creatives
- Future creative workforce for a creative economy
- Arts for all Queenslanders
- Sharing our stories and celebrating our storytellers.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2025–29

The *Strategic Plan* outlines our purpose and the objectives and strategies to achieve our vision.

Collecting memories

Sharing knowledge and stories through our collections.

Strategies

- Intentionally collect and share a trusted record of Queensland
- Reflect diverse historical and contemporary narratives by centring culturally safe co-design with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Preserve the collection for future generations through the development of resilient and robust systems and plans
- Reflect and reveal shared histories and new narratives through our collections and practices

Enriching experiences

Engaging our audiences through discovery, participation and learning.

Strategies

- Create safe, meaningful and memorable experiences that enable and inspire onsite, online and across Queensland
- Attract new audiences by celebrating and communicating compelling, innovative visitor experiences and programs
- Build inclusive digital experiences that are secure, rich and intuitive
- Prioritise easy to find and use information however people access collections, services and programs

People and communities

Building enduring, collaborative engagements and partnerships.

Strategies

- Drive the collective impact of libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres as place-based cultural and social hubs
- Embrace Brisbane 2032 by enhancing and accelerating services and programs
- Initiate and collaborate on diverse and culturally informed research to deepen knowledge
- Attract partnerships and investment to enhance service to Queenslanders

Responsive innovation

Pursuing innovative, sustainable and culturally responsive ways to deliver our services.

Strategies

- Champion an enriching workplace which is healthy, diverse and culturally responsive
- Invest in our people to embrace the opportunities and challenges in the digital age
- Pursue sustainable, resilient, and innovative environments and systems across all our work
- Deepen our agility to ensure flexibility and responsiveness to our changing world

OPERATIONAL PLAN 2025–26

These key activities enabled State Library to meet strategic objectives and deliver on *Queensland's Time to Shine: a 10-year strategy for arts and culture*.

Strengthen social cohesion and belonging through First Peoples' narratives and culturally appropriate materials

- Implement the First Nations Strategy to reframe our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities
- Reveal shared histories and new perspectives through engagement activities, with a particular focus on our unique collections

Increase engagement with regional Queenslanders to provide free access to information, knowledge and learning

- Increase State Library's engagement with Queensland teachers and students
- Drive online visits from regional Queensland through audience development, information services and through public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres

Strengthen our offer as a cultural destination which enables citizen engagement

- Build cultural experiences that celebrate Queensland's unique cultures and identities
- Seamlessly integrate digital into our exhibitions and programs, extending the reach of our unique offerings and ensuring those who use the library onsite and online have stimulating and rewarding experiences

Grow storytelling to empower our audiences to discover, participate and learn

- Explore innovative ways to collect and share the diverse stories of Queensland
- Collaborate with partners to foster a community that values stories and storytelling

Promote libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres as inclusive community cultural hubs

- Develop new funding models to deliver transformational change for all regions in Queensland, driving economic opportunities, improved social outcomes and greater digital inclusion
- Implement digital capacity and digital capability uplift initiatives in partnership with local government
- Amplify the impact of First 5 Forever, to give all Queensland children the best start through our onsite and online initiatives and in partnership with local government

Optimise our physical spaces and digital systems

- Deliver purposeful, safe and secure digital systems which are accessible and provide enhanced cyber security and service delivery
- Transform The Corner and optimise building spaces to meet future demand and deliver positive experiences for visitors

Foster a culturally aware and capable workforce to provide a safe and inclusive workplace for our visitors, staff, volunteers and contractors

- Implement the *First Nations Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2023–25*
- Implement the *Strategic Workforce Plan* to attract, retain and invest in our people to build a skilled, diverse and culturally responsive workforce

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

Expanding reach – onsite and online engagement that embraces innovation to deliver responsive services and connect more people across the state with content in new ways.

Vibrant cultural experiences – creation of meaningful and memorable cultural experiences, which build communities and share Queensland's remarkable stories.

Fostering truth and trust – sharing the diverse lives and experiences of people in Queensland in trusted and respectful ways through collections, community engagement and partnerships.

Strengthening democracy – sparking courageous conversations and citizen engagement and continuing to champion intellectual freedom and media literacy.

Statewide impact – harness the collective potential of physical and digital resources, as well as skilled staff in libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres across the state.

STRATEGIC RISKS

Cyber security – increasing sophistication and scale of cyber threats raises risk levels for our digital assets.

Rapidly evolving community needs – changing social, economic and cultural demands on libraries present challenges to the delivery of responsive library and information services for all.

Funding – financial sustainability requires diverse income streams and reprioritisation of existing funding to deliver on our commitments and enhance our services to meet demand.

Threats to our assets – extreme weather, natural hazards and the heightened national terrorism threat level create risks to State Library's people, collections, storage and infrastructure. The rise in global threats to freedom of expression, hate crimes and misinformation risks eroding the shared values foundational to libraries and trust in quality information sources.

Workforce resilience – the rapidly evolving context of our work requires competition for highly sought-after expertise in ICT, digital, leadership capability, and culturally responsive, safe and healthy ways of working.

PLANS AND PRIORITIES FOR NEXT REPORTING PERIOD

In 2026–27, State Library will:

- Preserve and provide access to Queensland's documentary heritage
- Enable knowledge, learning and public discourse
- Champion reading, literacy and lifelong learning
- Advance libraries and cultural partnerships for Brisbane 2032 legacy
- Deliver user-centred and inclusive services
- Uphold excellence in professional practice and governance
- Attract partnerships and investment.