Customs, Culture and Country

Reframing relationships. Healing and celebration. Returning Ancestors and Culture to Country.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' stories, perspectives, cultures, shared histories and continuing connections to Country are authentically represented, celebrated and shared across Queensland Museum.

Customs, Culture and Country: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy 2026–28 provides Queensland Museum's whole-of-organisation direction for strengthening relationships with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, embedding cultural authority in museum practice, and building culturally safe, accountable and enduring ways of working.

Queensland Museum is the custodian of the State Collection, and has a responsibility to care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Material, Ancestral Human Remains, Secret Sacred Objects, Stories, Knowledge and research in ways that are culturally safe, ethically grounded and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authority.

The Strategy reflects Queensland Museum's commitment to ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, leadership and agency shape our collections, research, exhibitions, programs, workforce, partnerships and engagement.

Grounded in reconciliation, collaboration, reciprocity and respect, the Strategy recognises Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold continuing cultural authority, knowledge and responsibilities for Country, communities, shared histories and heritage. It aligns with Queensland Museum's Strategic Plan 2026–30 and obligations under the *Public Sector Act 2022* and provides the framework for turning commitment into measurable change.

Strategic alignment and intent

The Strategy directly supports Queensland Museum's strategic objectives. As **Keepers of Queensland's legacy**, it strengthens stewardship, provenance, repatriation, access and cultural governance. As **Innovators changing the game**, it enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research, ethical collecting, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property protections, Indigenous Data Sovereignty and community partnerships. Through **Think big, act bold**, it builds the capability, workforce pathways and organisational systems needed to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priorities as business-as-usual. Through **Global moments, local meaning**, it ensures Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories, cultures, languages and creative leadership are visible across exhibitions, programs, digital engagement, statewide activity and major cultural moments. Through **Designed with you**, it positions co-design, collaboration and cultural authority as core practice.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander strategic priorities:

1. **Reconciliation and Cultural Authority**: embedding reconciliation, shared histories, cultural authority and governance pathways to strengthen self-determination, justice and reciprocal partnership.
2. **Bringing Them Home**: strengthening culturally safe care, access and repatriation of Human Ancestral Remains, Secret Sacred Objects and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural material, guided by community authority and cultural protocols.
3. **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Led**: embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, agency and decision-making across collections, research, exhibitions, programs and our shared histories, ensuring work is shaped with Traditional Owners, Elders, knowledge holders and communities.
4. **Cultural Capability and Governance**: strengthening cultural safety, organisational capability and accountability, embedding respectful decision-making, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property practice and shared responsibility across museum practice.
5. **Create and Nurture**: enabling a sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, creative practice and partnership ecosystem, grounded in trust, reciprocity and long-term shared benefit.

Operating environment

Queensland Museum is operating in a dynamic environment shaped by changing community expectations; increasing demand for repatriation and cultural access; workforce and resourcing pressures; digital transformation; climate impacts; and the growing significance of Queensland's cultural sector ahead of Brisbane 2032.

The Strategy will position the Museum to respond confidently to its operating environment by embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, cultural agency and community partnership across core business, while strengthening capability, governance, accountability and risk management across all sites.

- Opportunities: Strengthening Queensland Museum's role in repatriation and culturally safe care; expanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research, language visibility and digital access; and leveraging strategic partnerships, philanthropy and Brisbane 2032 opportunities to increase impact and investment.
- Key risks: Sustaining growth of workforce cultural capability, developing specialist expertise, ongoing resourcing, consistent portfolio adoption of the Strategy, and slow transition from project-based activity to embedded business-as-usual practice.
- Strategic enablers: Clear governance, sustained executive sponsorship, dedicated resourcing, defined portfolio accountabilities, integrated operational planning and regular monitoring of measures of success will support timely decision-making, strengthen delivery confidence and action early risk management.
- Strategic value: Ongoing engagement with staff, partners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will maintain trust, strengthen cultural safety and ensure all activities remain community-led, accountable and enduring.

Together, the Strategy and measures of success provide a practical framework for embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, knowledge, creativity and cultural agency across Queensland Museum. By aligning strategic ambition with operational delivery, accountability and continuous improvement, the Strategy will strengthen the Museum's purpose, performance and future impact as it works with communities to care for Queensland's legacy, create new knowledge and share histories of enduring significance.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy 2026–28

Reconciliation and Cultural Authority	Bring Them Home	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Led	Cultural Capability and Governance	Create and Nurture
Embed reconciliation, cultural authority and shared histories to advance self-determination, healing, justice and accountable partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. **Strategies** • Deepen partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities as trusted sources of connection, knowledge and cultural authority. • Elevate implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy by embedding reconciliation initiatives and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance pathways as BAU across Queensland Museum. • Support Arts Queensland's 'Time to Shine' through exhibitions, programs, commissions and retail opportunities that showcase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creativity, knowledge and cultural expression. **Measures of success** • 'Story Places' for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities established at each QM site by 31 December 2027. • Develop and implement an Employee Handbook for respectful engagement and communication with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by 31 December 2026. • Increase Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander merchandise held by QM retail shops on each site by 10% per annum. • Deliver at least three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focussed activities per annum per site, promoting issues of relevance to community.	**Advance healing and justice through the return of Ancestral Human Remains, Secret Sacred Objects and cultural heritage material to Country.** **Strategies** • Strengthen culturally safe care for Ancestral Human Remains, Secret Sacred Objects and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material. • Advance repatriation in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in accordance with cultural protocols. • Affirm our role as Queensland's lead agency for repatriation. **Measures of success** • 90% of agreed community access, cultural care and Keeping Place priorities are delivered annually and reported through annual reporting and QMATSICC governance processes. • Provenance research and repatriation readiness activities increase the number of collection items with verified provenance and community-informed cultural care documentation by 10% annually. • Active repatriation partnerships and funding pathways increase by 20% from the agreed baseline, with progress reported annually. • Continue active participation in established cross-government repatriation coordination mechanisms, with partnership outcomes and progress reported annually. • Framework for managing the receipt and return of repatriated cultural materials from international institutions into and from Queensland established by 30 June 2027.	**Centre Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agency and knowledge across collections, exhibitions, research and public programs to enable communities to shape how their stories, cultures and connections to Country are held, interpreted and shared.** **Strategies** • Deepen knowledge and interpretation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collection. • Commission and present Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led exhibitions, programs and digital content. • Advance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research that enhances the State Collection. **Measures of success** • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collection increases by at least 10 items annually. • A minimum of one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led exhibition is held annually. • Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander language included in all exhibition signage, educational material and programming across QM sites and channels. • 100% of new QM research projects undertaken on Country, or involving Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, collections or knowledge, include meaningful consultation with relevant communities. • State Collection accessed by Aboriginal peoples and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples at least 5 times per annum for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander -led initiatives. • A platform for sharing data and research relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collection items is established by 31 December 2027, and aligned to Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights and community protocols.	**Embed cultural safety, capability and accountability across Queensland Museum enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives to shape everyday practice, decision-making and visitor, community and partner experiences.** **Strategies** • Build workforce capability to apply culturally safe practices and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, shared histories, achievements and ongoing community challenges. • Embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety, ICIP practice and governance pathways that strengthen decision-making across Queensland Museum. • Advocate for the rights and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through our research, collections, partnerships and public platforms. **Measures of success** • QMATSICC meets quarterly to inform strategic decisions, strengthen advocacy and increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander awareness, procurement and partnership outcomes across QM. • At least 90% of employees complete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural capability learning and development activities as part of their PPP's annually. • Achieve the Queensland Government's procurement targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses annually.	**Grow a sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and invest in cultural leadership, creativity and partnerships that elevate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures across Queensland Museum.** **Strategies** • Amplify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee voices, wellbeing and connection through culturally safe support, feedback and engagement pathways. • Grow sustainable pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment, leadership and representation across roles, sites and decision-making structures. • Expand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships, procurement and investment to increase opportunity and impact. **Measures of success** • Demonstrated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee retention, satisfaction and sense of cultural safety (Working for Queensland survey). • Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Plan, including professional development and succession planning to achieve Queensland parity. • Achieve at least four engagements with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations per site per annum; and three engagements with non-Indigenous organisations regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters per site per annum. • Increase partnership and philanthropic funding relationships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initiatives annually.