



**QUEENSLAND  
MUSEUM**

**CUSTOMS CULTURE AND COUNTRY**

# **FIRST NATIONS STRATEGY**

**2024-28**

## Acknowledgement of Country

Queensland Museum acknowledges the First Peoples – the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waters and sky where we live and work. We honour their unbroken connection to Country, culture, and community. We pay respect to Elders past, present and future. We recognise our shared history and commit to embedding First Nations voices in Queensland's continuing story.

## Introduction

**Queensland Museum has been collecting stories from Queensland, its surrounding waters and near neighbours since 1862.**

Today, Queensland Museum (QM) is the keeping place for the State Collection: 15.2 million cultural artefacts, natural history specimens and geological treasures that represent Queensland and our place in the world.

We bring the State Collection to life through evidence-based research and compelling experiences delivered from five sites. We connect with communities across the state and beyond through education loans, a virtual museum online, popular publications and the Museum Development Officer program.

QM recognises Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Peoples, and Traditional Custodians of the lands, seas, and skies where we live and work. Their ancestral narratives are a vital part of Queensland's identity.

We strive to honour the living cultures of First Nations peoples every day in our scientific and cultural research, collection development, exhibitions, programs, and major events.

As Queensland's state museum, QM has a unique role to play in reframing the relationship with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We will leverage our reputation and public platforms to raise awareness of the social, political, and historical issues impacting First Nations peoples. We will provide culturally safe, welcoming places for all communities to create and share stories together as a catalyst for healing and positive social change.

## Vision

We aspire to be a world class museum: where everyone is welcome to discover Queensland and share authentic, inspiring stories.

## Purpose

We celebrate the cultural, social, and natural heritage of Queensland.

## Priorities

The *Queensland Museum Strategic Plan 2023-27* describes six priorities that will help us deliver our purpose and pursue our vision.

- Customs Cultures and Country:** we will recognise the vibrant living cultures of First Nations peoples. We will acknowledge past injustices, tell hidden histories, and embed First Nations voices as a vital, continuing thread in our organisational fabric.
- The archive is alive and well:** we will shine a spotlight on Queensland's priceless collections, keep them safe, and bring back of house to front of house to demonstrate the importance of our natural, cultural, and geological treasures.
- Biodiversity champion:** we will preserve Queensland's unique biodiversity by applying research and knowledge to achieve real outcomes in wildlife and threatened species management; environment and reef protection; biosecurity; and ecosystem resilience.
- Digital evolution:** we will harness new and emerging technologies to expand our reach, personalise experiences, deepen our impact and be more efficient and flexible in the way we work.
- Captivated audiences:** we will strike a balance between expert knowledge and compelling outcomes to truly connect with diverse audiences in ways that inspire awe and wonder.
- A museum without borders:** we will break down barriers and deliver authentic experiences, contemporary research and best-practice museum services to all Queenslanders, no matter where they live.

## Explanation of Terms

In this document, we use the terms 'Aboriginal', 'Aboriginal communities' or 'Aboriginal peoples' for circumstances exclusive to Aboriginal peoples. Correspondingly, the terms 'Torres Strait Islands', 'Torres Strait Islander communities' and 'Torres Strait Islander peoples' are applied for matters unique to Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We acknowledge that 'First Nations peoples' is the preferred collective term for individuals of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent, who identify and are accepted as such by the communities in which they live. In this document, the terms 'First Nations peoples' and 'First Nations communities' are used when referring to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples collectively.

## Our Strategy: Reframing the Relationship

**First Nations peoples’ stories, perspectives, history and heritage are authentically represented, celebrated, and shared.**

*Customs Culture and Country: First Nations Strategy 2024-28* (the Strategy) (this document) presents a four-year framework to reframe QM’s relationship with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, embed First Nations voices as a vital, continuing thread in our organisational fabric, and build a more inclusive, equitable and harmonious future.

The Strategy aligns with QM’s vision, priorities, and obligations under the *Public Sector Act 2022*<sup>1</sup>. It is founded on the principles of reconciliation, collaboration, reciprocation and mutual respect, with a commitment to promoting cultural awareness, understanding and inclusivity.

**This Strategy represents an organisation-wide commitment, and everyone has a vital role in its success.**

The Strategy was informed by:

- [Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2023](#)
- [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) and [Queensland’s 2022 Implementation Plan](#)
- [Creative Together 2020-2030: A 10-year Roadmap for arts, culture and creativity in Queensland](#)
- [First Peoples Indigenous Roadmap for Enhancing Indigenous Engagement in Museums and Galleries](#)
- [National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries 2.0](#)
- [Path to Treaty Bill 2023](#)
- Queensland Government’s [Cultural Engagement Framework](#) and [Reconciliation Action Plan 2023-25](#)
- [Queensland Healing Strategy](#)
- [Queensland Museum Act 1970](#)
- [Revive: Australia’s Cultural Policy](#)
- [Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act](#)
- The Torres Strait Regional Authority [Cultural Policy](#)
- [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#).

The Strategy is based on five objectives, depicted overleaf.

By actively and authentically engaging with First Nations peoples, valuing their knowledge, and fostering inclusivity, QM will serve as a platform for dialogue, healing, and cultural exchange while actively supporting the amplification of First Nations voices.

The Strategy is the overarching framework that describes QM’s journey towards reframing the relationship with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

All First Nations activities, plans and policies are informed by the Strategy, and sit under the framework. The Strategy will also be integrated across all aspects of QM business.



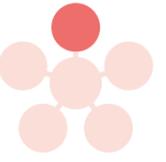
<sup>1</sup> The *Public Sector Act 2022* (s23) requires Chief Executives of prescribed entities (such as QM) to develop, publish and audit an annual *Reframing the Relationship Plan* that reflects the Queensland Government’s commitment to a reframed relationship with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



## Customs Culture And Country: First Nations Strategy 2024-28



<sup>2</sup>QMATSIIC is the Queensland Museum Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultative Committee.



## Action Plan

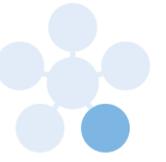
1. **Reconciliation and truth telling:** recognise and pay respect to First Nations peoples as Traditional Owners of the land now known as Australia, acknowledge their right to self-determination and call to address past injustices in order to forge a path towards healing and justice.

Objectives	Focus Activities	Lead	Measures of Success
1.1. Develop and sustain partnerships with First Nations communities throughout Queensland and the Pacific based on mutual respect, trust, and shared decision-making.	a. Recognise and adapt to the unique cultural protocols and ceremonial traditions upheld by First Nations communities where we live and work. <b>F</b>	Principal, Engagement	100% of public events include appropriate Welcome to Country.
	b. Build and sustain relationships with community groups, Traditional Owners and Indigenous Knowledge Centres and cultural organisations across the state, and establish inclusive channels for First Nations communities to engage with QM regarding matters of importance to them. <b>F</b>	Director, First Nations Principal, Engagement	At least 25 targeted engagements with Traditional Owner communities per annum.
	c. Create a sense of belonging by opening up QM's public spaces as welcoming places for First Nations communities to gather, connect and share. <b>Q</b>	Principal, Engagement	'Story Places' for First Nations communities established at each QM site by 30 June 2027.
1.2. Develop, implement, and acquit and publicly report progress Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) in accordance with the Reconciliation Australia Framework.	a. Implement the <i>Innovate</i> RAP within time and budget. <b>F</b>	Principal Project Officer	100% of <i>Innovate</i> RAP activities completed by 30 June 2025.
	b. Participate in the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire conducted by Reconciliation Australia. <b>F</b>	Principal Project Officer	100% participation rate per annum.
	c. Promote the rights of First Nations peoples to make decisions about their own political, social, economic, and cultural affairs in accordance with their own values, customs, and traditions.	Principal, Engagement	At least two First Nations-led projects in 2023-24, 2024-25, increasing to five First Nations-led projects in 2025-26, 2026-27.
1.3. Support Queensland's Path to Treaty Commitment	a. Support the telling of historical truths and injustices that have impacted First Nations people and communities in a trauma informed, dignified, healing and culturally safe way. <b>F</b>	Director, First Nations	100% participation in the Queensland Government's Truth Telling and Healing Inquiry. Include truth telling about the shared history of all Australians in exhibitions, programs and events. Support regional museums with local truth telling activities through the Museum Development Officer program.
	b. Develop and implement a Truth Telling Commitment Statement, acknowledging QM's colonial history has created lasting feelings of deep sorrow and suffering for generations of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples. <b>F</b>	Director, First Nations	Truth Telling and Healing Statement of Commitment published by 30 June 2024.
	c. Promote equitable and just relationships between First Nations and non-First Nations communities. <b>F</b>	Chief Executive Officer	Publish at least three case studies promoting partnerships with First Nations communities on QM channels per annum.



2. **Bring them home:** address past collecting practices by partnering with First Nations communities to return stolen items to Country and community, enabling families to respect and honour their ancestors, fulfil spiritual and cultural obligations, and perform customary funeral rites.

Objectives	Focus Activities	Lead	Measures of Success
2.1. Care for Ancestral Remains, Secret Sacred Objects and cultural heritage material belonging to First Nations peoples.	a. Facilitate community access to First Nations peoples wanting to visit and pay respect to their Ancestors, and cultural heritage. <b>F</b>	Senior Manager, Repatriation	10% increase in community access in 2023-24; 15% increase in 2024-25 and 2025-26; 20% increase in 2026-27.
	b. Develop/update, implement and review protocols for receiving, handling, storing, and displaying First Nations Cultural Heritage Materials in consultation with First Nations communities. <b>G</b>	Principal Curator Senior Manager, Repatriation	Protocols developed and implemented by 30 June 2025.
	c. Collaborate with Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities, and the Arts to develop a whole of government strategy for establishing community-controlled Keeping Places on Country.	Director, First Nations	Keeping Place at Queensland Museum Kurilpa upgraded by 30 June 2025. Keeping Place at Museum of Tropical Queensland established by 30 June 2027.
2.2. Repatriate Ancestral Remains, Secret Sacred Objects and cultural heritage material to community in accordance with cultural protocols.	a. Build capacity and support First Nations communities through the measured and complex process of repatriation. <b>F</b>	Senior Manager, Repatriation	10% increase in repatriation activities in 2023-24; 15% increase in 2024-25 and 2025-26; 20% increase in 2026-27.
	b. Establish provenance of Ancestral Remains, Secret Sacred Objects and Cultural Heritage Material to identify their origins and rightful Country, family, or language group. <b>F</b>	Senior Manager, Repatriation	At least 20% of unprovenanced items provenanced by 30 June 2027.
	c. Develop/update, implement and review work health and safety practices to ensure the cultural and physical wellbeing of employees conducting repatriation activities. <b>G</b>	Senior Manager, Repatriation	Protocols developed and implemented by 31 December 2024.
2.3. Affirm our role as Queensland's lead agency for repatriation.	a. Pursue government, corporate and philanthropic support for repatriation activities. <b>F</b>	Senior Manager, Repatriation	10% increase in funding annually.
	b. Collaborate with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies to develop a framework for managing repatriation of cultural heritage materials from international institutions. <b>F</b>	Director, First Nations	Framework established by 30 June 2025 and implemented by 30 June 2026.
	c. Re-establish Queensland's whole of government Repatriation Working Group, under the direction of the QM, to advise, lead and proactively report repatriation activities to the Treaty Institute.	Director, First Nations	Working Group established by 30 June 2024, and then quarterly meetings and reports to the Treaty Institute.



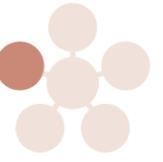
3. **First Nations led:** Build and sustain relationships with First Nations peoples and communities, amplify and enable their agency as Traditional Owners and knowledge holders and elevate their voices in our collections, exhibitions, research, and public programs.

Objectives	Focus Activities	Lead	Measures of Success
3.1. Deepen knowledge and understanding of the First Nations collection.	a. Build the State Collection through strategic, ethical acquisitions and contemporary commissions created by First Nations cultural practitioners and knowledge holders. <b>G</b>	Principal Curator	First Nations collection increased by at least 10 items per annum.
	b. Decolonise the State Collection by diversifying collection narratives to include First Nations voices alongside traditional, Eurocentric perspectives. <b>F</b>	Principal Curator	At least 20% of the State Collection decolonised by 2027.
	c. Review collection policies and acquisition practices to ensure they are culturally sensitive and aligned with the rights and interests of First Nations communities. <b>G</b>	Principal Curator	Policies and practices reviewed by 30 June 2025.
3.2. Deepen understanding and respect for First Nations cultures through dynamic programming that engages audiences onsite, offline, and online.	a. Co-curate temporary and semi-permanent exhibitions that celebrate the diverse histories, cultures, and contemporary experiences of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples. <b>Q</b>	Principal Curator	At least one new First Nations-focussed exhibition per annum.
	b. Develop and deliver a calendar of public events that feature First Nations voices and promote traditional knowledges, art, music, dance, and other cultural expressions. <b>Q</b>	Principal Engagement	At least five First Nations-focussed public events per annum.
	c. Incorporate First Nations languages in exhibition signage, educational materials, and public programming. <b>Q</b>	Principal Curator Principal Engagement	First Nations language included in all exhibition signage, educational materials, and public programming by 30 June 2027
3.3. Engage in First Nations-led research to achieve real outcomes in cultural awareness, environmental protection and ecosystem resilience.	a. Research to be co-designed and co-authored with First Nations communities. <b>Q</b>	Principal Curator	100% of all new QM research projects to include meaningful consultation with First Nations communities.
	b. Develop opportunities for First Nations researchers, historians, writers, and artists to access QM collections, for research and expertise for academic, artistic, and cultural research. <b>Q</b>	Principal Curator	State Collection accessed by at least 5 times per annum for First Nations-led initiatives.
	c. Investigate a platform; informed and protected by Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights and community protocols; to share data and research related to First Nations collection items. <b>Q</b>	Principal Curator	Platform developed by 30 June 2027



4. **A culturally competent workforce:** equip employees with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours necessary to serve individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Objectives	Focus Activities	Lead	Measures of Success
4.1. Build cultural competence by deepening organisational knowledge and understanding of First Nations culture, our shared history, accomplishments, and the ongoing challenges faced by community.	a. Provide employees and volunteers with factual, culturally sensitive materials to promote meaningful interpretations and deeper understanding of First Nations cultures, and to enhance empathy and awareness of lived experience. <b>F</b>	Principal Engagement	Cultural awareness training and/or support materials developed and disseminated to staff and volunteers to augment exhibitions and public programs [see 3.2(a)-(c)]
	b. Deliver mandatory cultural competency training and cultural immersion opportunities for employees and volunteers on an ongoing basis. <b>F</b>	Principal Project Officer	100% completion rate for annual cultural competency training.
	c. Embed Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property and other First Nations customs, laws and practices within organisational policy and process (as appropriate) and ensure governance frameworks are culturally sensitive and respectful. <b>F</b>	Principal Project Officer	Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Policy developed and implemented by 31 July 2024.
4.2. Convene the Queensland Museum Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultative Committee (QMATSICC) to provide insight, advice and recommendations on matters impacting First Nations communities.	a. Ensure integrity and transparency of First Nations deliverables through regular progress reports and consultation with QMATSICC. <b>G</b>	Director, First Nations	Quarterly meetings of QMATSICC.
	b. Call upon QMATSICC members to assist with engagement and collaboration between QM and First Nations communities. <b>G</b>	Director, First Nations	All QMATSICC members provide specialist advice/assistance with at least one First Nations initiative per annum.
	c. Review the QMATSICC Terms of Reference, individual performance of QMATSICC members to ensure relevance and accountability. <b>G</b>	Director, First Nations	Reviews completed by 31 December each year, and improvement plans developed and implemented as appropriate.
4.3. Advocate for the rights and interests of First Nations peoples within our sphere of influence.	a. Encourage First Nations procurement, partnerships, and other opportunities for First Nations businesses to work with QM. <b>G</b>	Principal Project Officer	At least 5 contracts with First Nations businesses per annum.
	b. Raise awareness about issues affecting First Nations communities and advocate for equitable solutions. <b>G</b>	Principal Engagement	At least one new First Nations-focussed exhibition per annum [refer 3.2(a)]. Publish news articles, opinion pieces on the QM intranet and staff newsletter.
	c. Promote First Nations days/events. <b>Q</b>	Principal Engagement	Increased awareness of First Nations matters amongst QM employees.



5. **Create and nurture:** build a strong and sustainable First Nations workforce and invest in initiatives that celebrate the rich cultures of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Objectives	Focus Activities	Lead	Measures of Success
5.1. Ensure First Nations employees are heard and provide the necessary support to amplify their voices.	a. Create safe spaces for First Nations employees and volunteers to engage in conversations and exchange ideas regarding First Nations matters. <b>F</b>	Director, First Nations	Increased employment retention and satisfaction (Working for Queensland <sup>2</sup> )
	b. Establish accessible and culturally appropriate support networks for First Nations employees to safeguard their cultural wellbeing. <b>F</b>	Director, First Nations	Increased employment retention and satisfaction (Working for Queensland <sup>2</sup> ) Increase engagement between QMATSICC and employees who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples
	c. Sustain ongoing internal communication about this Strategy across QM, ensuring there are designated contacts for employees to seek clarification and offer feedback. <b>F</b>	Director, First Nations	Increased awareness and commitment to First Nations strategy by QM employees.
5.2. Increase the proportion of First Nations employees and volunteers.	a. Develop and implement a recruitment, retention and professional development and succession strategy that establishes pathways for future First Nations employees through a range of opportunities including volunteering, paid internships, fellowships, casual placements, cultural exchange, and third-party programs. <b>F</b>	Director, First Nations	Strategy developed and implemented by 30 September 2024. All roles in the First Nations team filled by 31 December 2024. 4.8% First Nations employment across QM by 30 June 2027.
	b. Promote representation of First Nations peoples at all levels of the museum's leadership and decision-making structures. <b>F</b>	Director, First Nations	Maintain First Nations representation on Board (3) and Friends Committees (1).
5.3. Forge strategic partnerships to increase scale and impact of Customs, Culture and Country priorities.	a. Leverage relationships with First Nations community groups and like-minded cultural organisations. <b>Q</b>	Director, First Nations	At least 12 engagements with First Nations organisations per annum. At least 6 engagements with non-First Nations organisations regarding First Nations matters per annum.
	b. Partner with industry, academia and private philanthropists who share our vision and can support our Strategy. <b>Q</b>	Director, First Nations	Increase in funding for First Nations initiatives.

<sup>2</sup> Working for Queensland is an annual survey that measures Queensland public sector employee perceptions of their work, manager, team and organisation.

Queensland Museum welcomes feedback on this strategy.

Visit [museum.qld.gov.au/reconciliation](https://museum.qld.gov.au/reconciliation), call (07) 3153 3000 or email [firstnations@qm.qld.gov.au](mailto:firstnations@qm.qld.gov.au) for further information.

