

Memoirs of the Queensland Museum | **Culture**

Volume 12

**‘Wild Australia’:  
performers, productions and politics**

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**A Queensland Government Project**

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# Acknowledgements

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# Foreword

The Queensland Museum was first established in 1862. As an institution it had developed from colonial beginnings with an ambition of intellectual stimulation, a shared interest in technology and science and the collection of natural history specimens, and a desire to understand Aboriginal material culture. The reality of museums is that they are organisations borne of and operating in a colonial and now post-colonial context.

In our inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan established in 2019, Queensland Museum made an apology for the museum's historical role in past collecting practices:

Since 1862, Queensland Museum Network has acquired Secret and/or Sacred Objects and Ancestral Remains from across Queensland, the Torres Strait Islands and the Pacific. It is acknowledged that some past practices of the Museum, and its staff, were not respectful of, and did not understand the significance and cultural importance of objects and human remains. Traditional owners were also not empowered to prevent the removal of their possessions. Queensland Museum Network apologises for these actions.

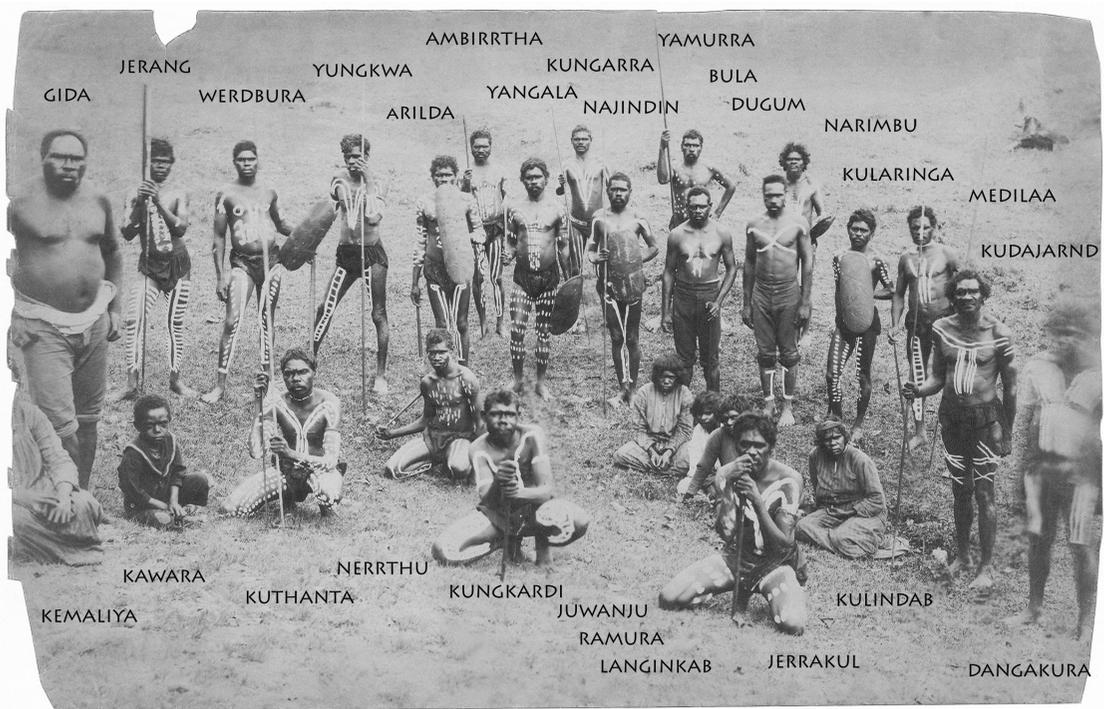
One element of QMN's journey of reconciliation is that of truth telling. In this important volume of the *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum – Culture* series, the truths of colonial collecting practices are revealed through the careful research of the university and museum partners in the ARC Linkage Project titled 'How Meston's "Wild Australia Show" shaped Australian Aboriginal History' (LP160100415). This research provides an opportunity to bring to light one small but significant aspect of these practices, related to the Queensland Museum's association with collector Archibald Meston. The activities, correspondence, photographs and collections related to Meston reveal exactly the past practices that are at the centre of difficult conversations about Queensland Museum's Indigenous Cultures collections, in terms of the treatment of First Nations people, the acquisition of Ancestral Remains and Secret and/or Sacred objects, and in the unequal and often violent exertions of power used to acquire cultural objects.

Queensland Museum is pleased to present this volume of critical research from a collaborative research team that has worked with First Nations communities to bring to light a hitherto little known element of their stories, and that have dug through the archives and collections of Queensland Museum to reveal the unvarnished reality of colonial practices in the late nineteenth century.

**Dr Jim Thompson**

CEO Queensland Museum Network

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Wild Australia performers at the Queensland Press Club Picnic. Chelmer Reach, Brisbane River, 22 November 1892. Names identified by Michael Aird and Paul Memmott. Photo courtesy of Michael Graham-Stewart.