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THE LOW ISLES PRESERVATION SOCIETY WINNER 2026 GALLERY AND MUSEUM ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

The Low Isles Preservation Society has been named **Volunteer Museum / Gallery of the Year** at the **2026 Gallery and Museum Achievement Awards (GAMAA)**, presented by Museums & Galleries Queensland (M&G QLD) at **Ipswich Art Gallery** on Thursday 8 October.

Now in its twenty-second year, the GAMAA are Queensland's premier awards program for the museum and gallery sector, recognising excellence, innovation and leadership across the State. Special guest, **Ipswich City Council Mayor Teresa Harding**, congratulated this year's recipients and presented winners with individually crafted trophies by acclaimed Queensland glass artist **Jarred Wright**.

The Low Isles Preservation Society (LIPS) was named **Volunteer Museum / Gallery of the Year** in recognition of its outstanding achievement in transforming the Low Isles Museum into an engaging and accessible cultural destination that celebrates the rich scientific, maritime and cultural heritage of the Great Barrier Reef.

What began as a grassroots effort to revitalise an ageing museum and improve access to its stories has become a project of regional significance, influencing broader heritage planning and interpretation across Far North Queensland.

Demonstrating the extraordinary impact of volunteer leadership, LIPS volunteers, together with island caretakers Ren and Col Musson, partnered with Senior Museum Development Officer Dr Jo Wills to undertake a comprehensive redevelopment of the Museum's collections, interpretation and visitor experience. The project was shaped around four key themes: Traditional Custodians and Sea Country; the Low Isles Lighthouse and its keepers; the 1928-29 Great Barrier Reef Expedition; and the biodiversity and global significance of the Great Barrier Reef.

A key feature of the redevelopment is the Museum's interpretation of the historic Great Barrier Reef Expedition, which brings together archival photographs, scientific research and personal stories to highlight the internationally significant role the Low Isles played in advancing understanding of the Reef. Through thoughtful and resourceful exhibition development, the project also elevated First Nations perspectives and other previously underrepresented stories, creating a richer and more inclusive visitor experience.

Beyond the Museum itself, the project has delivered lasting organisational benefits, strengthening exhibition development, collections management, research and curatorial practice, while building volunteer capability and fostering strategic partnerships with Queensland Museum, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation and other key stakeholders.

The redevelopment has strengthened community ownership of local heritage, enhanced cultural tourism and provided a catalyst for broader regional projects celebrating maritime history and Sea Country. It stands as a powerful testament to the fact that impact is not determined by scale, but by vision, collaboration and an unwavering commitment to community stewardship.

Museums & Galleries Queensland Executive Director, Rebekah Butler, said "The Low Isles Preservation Society demonstrates what can be achieved when passionate volunteers come together with a shared vision and commitment to preserving and sharing their community's heritage. Through dedication, collaboration and strong community leadership, the volunteers have transformed the Low Isles Museum into a vibrant cultural destination that honours the diverse stories of the Great Barrier Reef and strengthens connections to place."

This year's awards attracted nominations from across the state, recognising excellence in exhibitions, public programs, collections management, First Nations and community engagement, leadership, innovation and volunteer contribution.

M&G QLD congratulates each of this year's winners, highly commended recipients and finalists. Their achievements exemplify the passion, creativity and commitment that continue to enrich Queensland's cultural landscape and inspire excellence across the sector.

ABOUT MUSEUMS & GALLERIES QUEENSLAND

Museums & Galleries Queensland (M&G QLD) is the peak professional industry body for the public museum and gallery sector in Queensland.

Our purpose is to inspire and support excellence in Queensland museums, galleries and keeping places, fostering innovation, connection and cultural leadership.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR 2026 GAMAA SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

The 2026 GAMAA are proudly supported by the **Ipswich Art Gallery** and sponsored by **Public Galleries Queensland** and **Australian Museums and Galleries Association Queensland**.

The 2026 GAMAA trophies are generously supported by **Brian Tucker**.

For media enquiries, please contact:

Rebekah Butler, Executive Director, M&G QLD

Museums & Galleries Queensland

Phone: 07 3059 9740

Freecall: 1800 866 101

Mobile: 0422 579 180

Email: rebekah.butler@magsq.com.au

Website: www.magsq.com.au

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