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The University of Queensland Anthropology Museum Highly Commended at State Awards

The Winners, Highly Commended and Finalists of the **2024 Gallery and Museum Achievement Awards** (GAMAA) were proudly announced by Museums & Galleries Queensland (M&G QLD) on Tuesday 8 October, at a special awards presentation held at the Queensland Museum Cobb+Co, Toowoomba.

The University of Queensland Anthropology Museum received a **Highly Commended** for its outstanding achievement in the category of **Projects: Organisations with Paid Staff** for the ***Kirrenderri, Heart of the Channel Country*** touring exhibition.

Curated by the UQ Anthropology Museum curator Mandana Mapar, and Mithaka curators Tracey Hough and Shawnee Goringe, this touring initiative presented a visually striking and narrative-rich exhibition chronicling extraordinary stories from one of the most remote locations at the very heart of Australia.

In June 2019, the Mithaka people of Southwestern Queensland met with collaborators in Toowoomba to create a substantial cultural mapping project. At this meeting, distinguished researchers from the Australian National University, The University of Queensland, the Alice Duncan-Kemp family and UQ Anthropology Museum, discussed how best to conserve this unique environmental and cultural heritage. Together, their work formed the foundation of *Kirrenderri*, a timely exhibition that illustrates the cultural and aesthetic riches of the Mithaka region of Channel Country, and underscores the historic milestones and the resilience of relationships forged between Aboriginal and pioneering families in the region, from the late 1890s to the present.

From 2023–2024, the exhibition was displayed in four regional and remote Queensland centres and engaged more than 35,000 visitors. The exhibition's curriculum-aligned Education Resource received accolades from the Queensland History Teachers Association for its educational merit, and Daniel Greene, Assistant Director of Education at AIATSIS said it was an 'exemplar of quality place-based learning grounded on Country'.

In awarding The University of Queensland Anthropology Museum a Highly Commended in this category, the 2024 GAMAA judging panel praised the Museum and its collaborators for this heartfelt, thoughtful and carefully curated project that resulted in meaningful, tangible outcomes



and wide-ranging learning opportunities. Additionally, it marked UQ Anthropology Museum's first extensive regional tour and fostered valuable connections with host communities and tourism partners.

This exhibition project was recognised for its exceptional storytelling, collaborative nature and positive impact. It spurred significant community engagement, inspiring members of the public to return culturally significant objects, including swords and grindstones, to the Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation. Moreover, the exhibition encouraged audiences to deepen their knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and fostered a greater understanding of the importance of cultural objects for the communities from which they originated.

The exhibition also contributed to significant professional development within the sector, as UQ Anthropology Museum staff delivered training and collaborated with locals at each of the venues. This collaboration not only ensured the exhibition's successful delivery but also facilitated the exchange of knowledge and skills, benefiting both the participating communities and the host venue's staff.

Museums & Galleries Queensland (M&G QLD) Executive Director, Rebekah Butler said, "The University of Queensland Anthropology Museum is worthy of a Highly Commended in this very competitive awards category. It deserves congratulations for producing and touring this important and culturally significant exhibition that demonstrated exceptional outcomes through its research, partnerships and engagement."

Ms Butler continued, "The 2024 Winners and Finalists were selected from a strong field of nominations received from organisations, large and small, across Queensland. It is an honour to be shining a spotlight on the outstanding work of so many worthy individuals and organisations."

Now in its twentieth year, the GAMAA were established by Museums & Galleries Queensland (M&G QLD) to honour the achievements of our State's individuals and organisations in striving towards excellence.

The 2024 Winners received an exquisite trophy by emerging Queensland artist, **Monique Burkhead**. Monique is of Polynesian, Maori and Australian heritage and lives and works in Cairns. She is passionate about conserving the environment, and through her art, hopes to raise an awareness of the fragile nature of our natural environment and the impacts of climate change.

The 2024 GAMAA trophies are generously supported by Brian Tucker.

The 2024 GAMAA are proudly supported by the **Queensland Museum** and sponsored by **Public Galleries Queensland** and **Australian Museums and Galleries Association Queensland**.

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