

10/09/2025

Bundaberg Regional Galleries Finalist at State Awards

The Winners, Highly Commended and Finalists of the **2025 Gallery and Museum Achievement Awards** (GAMAA) were proudly announced by Museums & Galleries Queensland (M&G QLD) on Tuesday 9 September, at a special awards presentation hosted by Museum of Brisbane. Special guest, **Hon John-Paul Langbroek MP, Minister for Education and the Arts**, congratulated this year's recipients and presented the winners with individually crafted trophies by artists Vanessa Cannon, Laurence Gibson, Gregory Salt, and Lorna Shuan, from the Yalanji Arts Collective, Kuku Yalanji Country, Mossman Gorge, Far North Queensland.

Bundaberg Regional Galleries was announced as a **Finalist** in the category of **Engagement: Organisations with 7+ FTE Paid Staff** for its program and exhibition, ***The Closet***.

In June 2024, Bundaberg Regional Galleries launched *The Closet*, a bold and deeply resonant community engagement program and exhibition that addressed the need for greater visibility and support for the LGBTQI+ community in the Bundaberg region. Curated by Carrie McCarthy, the exhibition featured works by 10 LGBTQI+ artists, including Troy-Anthony Baylis and Patrick Lester—both of whom spent formative years in Bundaberg. Their return to exhibit in their hometown was emotionally powerful, underscoring the exhibition's personal and cultural significance.

The exhibition took its title from a work in the Bundaberg Regional Galleries Collection by photographer, William Yang. Over the image, Yang has written a memory of his early years, the last line of text stating: 'I really don't want to go back there. The Closet'.

Planned to coincide with Pride Month, *The Closet* emerged in response to community feedback about the lack of local LGBTQI+ representation. Despite facing public criticism and calls to cancel the program, the Galleries remained steadfast in their commitment to inclusivity and opened the exhibition to an audience of 80, many of whom were first-time visitors. Over the month, 1,600 people visited the exhibition, with 250 more attending associated events including artist panels, family workshops, and Pride-themed community activities.

The judging panel noted this project was an excellent example of community-responsive programming. It fostered intergenerational dialogue, challenged stereotypes, and created a safe space for storytelling and visibility. It also led to lasting organisational change, with a renewed commitment to embedding LGBTQI+ voices in future programming and the Galleries' collection. *The Closet* received national recognition through the Australian National Pride Network and stands as a courageous, community-led initiative that transformed feedback into action and

art into advocacy. It exemplifies the power of regional galleries to lead social change through authentic, inclusive, and artistically rich engagement.

Museums & Galleries Queensland (M&G QLD) Executive Director, Rebekah Butler, said, "A worthy Finalist in this category, Bundaberg Regional Galleries is congratulated for their outstanding leadership in actively responding to community feedback and bolstering LGBTQI+ representation and inclusivity in their future programming and the Galleries' collection. This project is a credit to all involved."

Ms Butler continued, "This year, we undertook a comprehensive review of the award categories and introduced several new ones, which led to an unexpectedly high number of nominations. This response is a testament to the remarkable work being done by museums and galleries of all sizes throughout Queensland. It is a privilege to shine a spotlight on the achievements of so many deserving individuals and organisations."

Minister for the Arts, John-Paul Langbroek, said, "Queensland has more than 400 museums and galleries, all of which play an important role in sharing our stories, activating and connecting communities and attracting visitors to our regions."

"Congratulations to everyone who has taken part in this year's Gallery and Museum Achievement Awards, which celebrate individuals and organisations who support community and visitor engagement with arts and cultural experiences."

"The Crisafulli Government is proud to invest in Museums & Galleries Queensland through the Organisations Fund 2026-29, which supports delivery of our 10-year arts and culture strategy, *Queensland's Time to Shine* and its vision for a thriving creative sector supporting a statewide vibrant arts scene."

Now in its twenty-first 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 2025 GAMAA are proudly supported by the **Museum of Brisbane** and sponsored by **Public Galleries Queensland** and **Australian Museums and Galleries Association Queensland**.

The 2025 GAMAA trophies are generously supported by **Brian Tucker**.

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