

10/09/2025

Leitha Assan

Highly Commended 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.

Leitha Assan was acknowledged with a **Highly Commended** award in the category of **Individuals: Paid Staff** for her outstanding leadership, cultural advocacy, and curatorial excellence.

Working at Gab Titui Cultural Centre on Thursday Island for over 15 years, Leitha is an inspiring ambassador for Torres Strait Islander heritage, language, and arts. Her leadership blends cultural knowledge, professionalism, and compassion, championing strong values of truth-telling, inclusion, respect, and justice.

As Exhibitions and Public Programs Manager, Leitha leads a team of First Nations professionals to deliver impactful exhibitions, art awards, language programs, cultural performances, and artist support and sales.

Her CV lists an impressive number of curatorial achievements, including notable exhibitions such as *Evolution: Torres Strait Masks*, *Z150K: Coming of the Light*, and *Wisdom of Our Elders*. Her exhibition work showcases both renowned artists and local talents, reviving and preserving traditional art forms and knowledge while navigating the complexities of cultural protocols with care.

Programmed by Leitha, openings at Gab Titui are more than just events; they are culture-filled celebrations, featuring prayer, song, dance, food and art, highlighting the essential role of tradition in contemporary life and fostering community pride.

Leitha's influence extends beyond the Torres Strait, through her involvement with the Indigenous Literacy Foundation, Cairns Indigenous Art Fair, and the Coalition of Peaks. She also actively contributes to the International Decade of Indigenous Languages and Closing the Gap initiatives. As a leader and mentor, Leitha's impact is profound. She generously shares her skills and knowledge, fostering opportunities for her team, local artists and the next generation. Leitha participated in the National Museum of Australia's inaugural Encounters Fellowship, spending time

in Canberra and the United Kingdom to pursue her learning, and was the first Torres Strait Islander woman to serve as Senior Curator, First Nations, at Queensland Museum, paving the way for future leaders.

Museums & Galleries Queensland (M&G QLD) Executive Director, Rebekah Butler, said "Leitha Assan is highly deserving of this recognition. Her leadership continues to shape First Nations cultural practice, ensuring that the arts and cultural heritage of the Torres Strait Islands not only survive but actively prosper."

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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