

10/09/2025

Qantas Founders Museum

Winner 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.

Qantas Founders Museum was announced as the **Winner** for its outstanding achievements in the category of **Projects: Organisations with 1-6 FTE Paid Staff** for its project, ***Yayoi in the Outback***.

The Qantas Founders Museum is recognised as a Winner in this category for its outstanding achievements in presenting Yayoi Kusama's major contemporary art installation, *The Spirits of the Pumpkins Descended into the Heavens*, in Longreach, Queensland. This exhibition marked a transformative moment for cultural programming in Outback Queensland, attracting over 24,500 visitors during its seven-month run, positioning Longreach as a cultural destination.

Sourced through the National Gallery of Australia's *Regional Initiatives Program* supported by Metal Manufactures, this immersive installation featured an enchanting yellow room adorned with black polka dots, captivating visitors of all ages with its mirrored box reflecting illuminated pumpkin sculptures. The exhibition not only boosted local tourism but also provided over 500 students from 30 schools with a unique arts experience, fostering creativity and cultural appreciation in a region that has limited access to such events.

Through this project, Qantas Founders Museum demonstrated exceptional leadership by reimagining its identity from an aviation museum to a dual-purpose cultural organisation. The successful delivery of this high-profile international installation showcased the Museum's capacity for meticulous planning and resource management, including the construction of a custom-built, environmentally controlled exhibition space with appropriate security, lighting and staffing to meet the National Gallery's loan requirements.

The exhibition's success has created new connections between tourism and the arts, changed local perceptions of the Museum and brought contemporary cultural experiences to Queensland's outback communities. The Museum's bold initiative has proven that contemporary art can thrive in regional Australia and has inspired future cultural programming.

The judges commended Qantas Founders Museum for their ambitious efforts and leadership in bringing an internationally acclaimed artist's work to such a regional area of Australia, setting a new benchmark for regional cultural programming. They further highlighted the importance of such a project in fostering cultural engagement in the local community, with a particular focus on school groups that give children from remote areas an opportunity to experience a significant piece of contemporary art, in most cases for the first time.

Museums & Galleries Queensland (M&G QLD) Executive Director, Rebekah Butler, said, "Qantas Founders Museum is a deserving Winner in this highly competitive category for their initiative, leadership and vision. Bringing Yayoi Kasama's world-renowned contemporary art Longreach is a wonderful example of the power of cultural programming to inspire and connect communities, no matter how remote."

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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