

Path to Treaty Bill 2023

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Submission to the Community Support and Services Committee on the Path to Treaty Bill 2023 from State Library of Queensland

State Library of Queensland (State Library) is committed to Path to Treaty and to First Nations peoples and their knowledge, strength and resilience being centred in everything we do. We are committed to respectful processes of truth-telling and support the Path to Treaty Bill 2023.

State Library's vision is to be a library of influence, inspiring and connecting people through knowledge, storytelling and creativity. The introduction of the Path to Treaty Bill 2023 marks a step in this landmark treaty-making reform process for Queensland. As the statutory body responsible for collecting and preserving Queensland cultural and documentary memory, State Library has an opportunity to make a significant contribution to Path to Treaty and truth-telling through our diverse and rich collections, experience in community engagement and strong statewide partnerships.

The Interim Truth and Treaty Body is hosted at State Library and meaningfully supported in this establishment phase through a shared services arrangement. State Library is currently providing governance, financial and human resources services. This experience has demonstrated the practical capacity for State Library to contribute to commitments to voice, truth-telling, healing and self-determination.

Over the next four years, some relevant and specific strategies which State Library is committed to are:

1. cultural safety, by building and implementing cultural capability and safety of our people, policies, programs and practices
2. enabling respectful truth-telling practices by all and supporting the Path to Treaty, centred on cultural safety and co-designed with First Nations peoples
3. decolonising our collections and practices to reflect and reveal shared histories and new perspectives and stories.

These strategies will guide deliberate and transformational changes to the way State Library operates and will require a reframing of relationships. State Library is developing a First Peoples Reframing Relationships Framework to provide a high-level overview of strategic intent, positioning and operating principles for State Library. The Framework will be developed through a co-designed process to build on the strengths of our current partnerships, highlight challenges and recommend key principles and actions that sustain and amplify our programs and partnership moving forward.

Key connections between State Library's planned strategic objectives and the Path to Treaty Bill include:

1. Collecting memories - sharing knowledge and stories through our collections

State Library intentionally collects and shares a trusted record of Queensland. This includes material which describes 'individual, familiar, cultural and societal impacts of colonisation' relevant to the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry. Examples of materials available through State Library include historic collections like the *Bloomfield River and District Photographs 1880-1886* which contains images taken by the settler Bauer family of Aboriginal people in the district. There are also more recent collections by First Nations creators, like the *Jo-Anne Driessens photographs 1997-2000* which documents everyday life, people, places and events in Cherbourg and other parts of Queensland.

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The collection of significant contemporary events and Queenslanders' response to social change is an important role of the State Library and ensures materials are available for future generations. State Library will work with the Treaty Institute and the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry to prioritise the collection, preservation and sharing of materials which are generated through these Path to Treaty processes. These materials are likely to include Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property. State Library will ensure that management and access to these materials is in accordance with Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights.

As part of treaty readiness, The Treaty Institute will consult, support and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to record the impacts and effects of colonisation on their communities. There is an opportunity for State Library to be considered as a trusted keeping place for elements of this material.

2. Enriching experiences – empowering our audiences to be open to discovery, participation and learning

State Library has a long-standing program to support communities in the revival, documentation and preservation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. This work raises awareness of the diversity and richness of Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and the impact of colonisation, and its continued legacy. This remains an important program for Queensland and will contribute to processes of truth-telling and healing. As part of the commitment to the United Nations declaration of International Decade of Indigenous Languages and the National Agreement of the Closing of the Gap, State Library is amplifying its languages programs through delivery of an annual First Languages symposium, enabling research, access, digital upskilling and collaboration between language custodians.

Through exhibitions, State Library offers experiences that are inspiring, thought-provoking and transformative to people by telling stories with collection and communities. For instance, an upcoming exhibition on Aboriginal drovers, stockmen and stockwomen will share stories of the lived experiences of Aboriginal people in the pastoral industry. This work can complement efforts to enable treaty readiness through engaging Queensland to understand the context for treaty-making.

The black&write! Indigenous Writing and Editing Project was established at State Library in 2011 to train First Nations editors to work in the Australian publishing industry, and to support First Nations authors in their career development. It is a First Nations led, nationally focused project that inspires people from all walks of life to connect with the rich knowledge, heritage and cultures of First Nations peoples through story. The practice framework adopted by First Nations editors has regard to culturally appropriate ways to work with the Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property of First Nations writers. There are parallels with the procedures which the Inquiry might use in conducting truth-telling hearings.

Another connection is the dedicated website *Curriculum Connect*, with teaching resources and professional development for teachers linked to content in State Library collections. State Library's consultation revealed teachers' highest area of need for curriculum resources was First Nations content. It features high-quality and original resources developed by State Library, like the podcast *Hi, I'm Eddie* which

dives into the life and legacy of Eddie Koiki Mabo. It also connects teachers with original materials, interviews and annotated bibliographies which link to the curriculum.

3. People and communities – building enduring, collaborative engagements and partnerships

State Library advocates for public libraries and partners with local government to enable a thriving statewide network of Queensland public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres. There are more than 320 public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres servicing Queensland communities. The Queensland Government provides over \$31 million per annum in financial support to councils operating library services in Queensland through Public Library and First 5 Forever funding. These enduring partnerships with local governments can be considered as an infrastructure to connect with people and communities. State Library supports Queensland's public libraries through advocacy, training, advice and financial support. The Truth Telling and Healing Inquiry may utilise this network of relationships.

The First 5 Forever program is a statewide program providing strong early literacy foundation for all Queensland children aged 0-5 years. As part of this program, First Nations programming and professional development kits have been developed to provide authentic First Nations developed resources to enrich opportunities to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of being, learning and doing. Nyurramba Garran artwork and design assets were developed for the public library network to use to promote early years programming to First Nations families. This example demonstrates how existing library infrastructure and relationships can be harnessed to connect with people and communities.

Recent market research about public library user groups commissioned by State Library revealed that 50% of current library visitors are interested in attending programs held at their library to learn about First Nations languages, cultures and the First Nations history of their local area. There is an opportunity for the First Nations Treaty Institute and the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry to consider public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres when designing strategies to engage with Queenslanders.

4. Responsive innovation – pursuing innovative, sustainable and culturally responsive ways to work

There are strategic opportunities for State Library to lead contributions to truth-telling and reframing relationships, as outlined above. State Library recognises the transformation of library collections, services and programs required to meet the digital age and changing community needs. In the context of reframing relationships, State Library is aware of the significant shifts required to build cultural safety. This has potential to impact models for partnerships with local governments, including those with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Shire Councils to support Indigenous Knowledge Centres.

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As a memory institution, State Library intentionally seeks, collects and shares authentic Queensland stories. There is an opportunity for this work to complement the First Nations Treaty Institute and the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry. It is recommended that potential areas for collaboration and the strengths of State Library are given consideration in the Path to Treaty. This submission in support of the Path to Treaty Bill 2023 will assist the Community Services and Support Committee to understand the maturity and readiness of State Library to contribute to this significant process for Queensland.