

22 March 2021

Footy jerseys and protests shirts make a statement in new showcase

Sports jerseys and protest and commemorative shirts tell the story of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pride, artistry and defiance in a unique showcase that opens at State Library of Queensland on 27 March.

Deadly Threads: where did you get that shirt? explores the emergence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander designed clothing in Queensland and its importance in social activism, cultural rituals and on the sporting field.

Over 190 shirts and rare items will be on display including the original Indigenous All Stars jersey, Johnathan Thurston's boots, shirts worn by land rights campaigner Eddie Koiki Mabo, tombstone opening shirts and dance outfits.

Since colonial rule, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have been forced to relinquish their traditional clothing in favour of European attire. However, contemporary clothing designed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders has become increasingly popular in Australia and is helping to reclaim cultural identity and pride.

Highlights include:

- rare sports jerseys (rugby league, rugby union, Aussie rules, netball, basketball)
- shirts from the Mabo Family Collection that celebrate the Mabo decision and Mabo Day
- memorial shirts designed for tombstone openings in the Torres Strait Islands
- t-shirts designed by artists Vernon Ah Kee, Richard Bell and Libby Harward
- Deadly Choices health check shirts (Institute for Urban Indigenous Health)
- commemorative shirts such as the 75th anniversary of the 75th Torres Strait Infantry

Quotes from Minister for the Arts Leanne Enoch:

"The *Deadly Threads* showcase presents an opportunity to explore the symbolic nature of the shirts and spark important conversations around First Nations cultures and history.

"Many of these First Nations-designed products have marked key moments in our recent social history and it's of great value to understand the ways they have inspired cultural pride in First Nations peoples in Queensland over the years."

Quotes from State Librarian and CEO Vicki McDonald AM:

"Visitors may be surprised to learn we hold such eclectic collection items at State Library, but they all help tell the story of Queensland in unique ways.

"Clothing has always been an important cultural signifier and we carefully preserve and make accessible key items for future generations.

“From contemporary, thought-provoking protest shirts to rare rugby league jerseys worn by First Nations athletes, there is something in this showcase for everyone.”

Deadly Threads: where did you get that shirt? showcase

27 Mar – 15 Aug

Open daily 10am–5pm | Free entry

kuril dhagun, level 1 | State Library of Queensland, Cultural Centre, South Bank

slq.qld.gov.au/whats-on | #slqDeadlyThreads

[Images available here](#)



Media enquiries
State Library of Queensland Communications team
media@slq.qld.gov.au
(07) 3840 7897

Interviews and images are available upon request.