

STATE LIBRARY OF QUEENSLAND

MEDIA RELEASE

1 August 2022

Soak up the history of tea towels at State Library

A collection of tea towels, believed to be the only one of its kind in the world, goes on display at State Library of Queensland from 6 August.

The *Queensland to a T* exhibition explores over 200 souvenir tea towels from the Glenn R Cooke Textiles collection held at State Library.

This remarkable collection of over 1,500 souvenir textiles was acquired from Mr Cooke, a social historian, curator, and collector.

'I have searched the great cultural institutions of the world which, at most, have a handful and none have such a comprehensive focus,' Mr Cooke said.

'For me, collecting is about learning and these tea towels help tell the social history of the state and explain how Queenslanders saw their local communities.'

Many of the tea towels, which date back to the 1950s, were originally made of Irish linen by well-known textile mills such as the family-owned Samuel Lamont & Sons Ltd in Antrim.

In the 1960s and 1970s Dennis Lamont travelled around Queensland by rail to persuade local businesses to buy their product as a promotional tool.

When he returned to Northern Ireland, Lamont's designers would create their interpretations of the Sunshine State and ship them to Australia.

Exhibition curator, Jacinta Sutton, said: 'at a time when commercial airline travel was taking off, these tea towels helped sell a certain idea of Queensland attractions, particularly the Great Barrier Reef and the Gold Coast, to domestic and overseas tourists.'

The collection has examples from Birdsville to Thursday Island.

Quotes from Minister for the Arts Leeanne Enoch:

'I encourage all Queenslanders to head to State Library of Queensland to check out the incredible range of tea towels on display as part of the *Queensland to a T* exhibition.'

'As a fascinating way of tracing our social history *Queensland to a T* is set to bring back memories for many visitors, featuring tea towels that were part of advertising promotions, souvenir tea towels showing maps and historic locations, and those that depict our local flora and wildlife.'

'Some tea towels even feature unique works by First Nations artists from Queensland, such as Thancoupie's stunning *Peetherree, the willy wagtail* and the beautiful crocodile design created by Cairns-based artist Jenuarrie, both printed by Reef Productions.'



Media enquiries
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Interviews are available upon request.

Quotes from State Librarian and CEO Vicki McDonald AM:

‘Tea towels were the ultimate holiday souvenir and keenly avoided by children at washing-up time.

‘For State Library the humble tea towel helps us uncover Queensland’s unique history in fun and fascinating ways.

‘And like opinions, we are pretty sure everyone has one!

‘So, leave the kitchen sink behind and come and get nostalgic at our latest must-see exhibition.’

Queensland to a T exhibition

6 Aug 2022 – 22 Jan 2023

Open daily 10am–5pm | Free entry

slq Gallery, level 2 | State Library of Queensland, Cultural Centre, South Bank

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