

9 February 2019

Exhibition tells story of blackbirding in Queensland

Tricked, kidnapped and enslaved; the history of the strength and resilience of Australian South Sea Islanders is explored in State Library of Queensland's newest exhibition opening 16 February.

Plantation Voices looks at the community's contribution to the state's cultural and economic landscape over the past 150 years.

Australian South Sea Islanders are the descendants of South Sea Islanders who were used as cheap labour for the Australian sugar and cotton industries between 1863 and 1904.

Many were blackbirded, kidnapped or tricked into work on plantations all along the Queensland coastline as indentured labourers.

The exhibition charts the paths of descendants in reclaiming their lost past and forging new identities into the future.

Through State Library's heritage collections, this free exhibition gives voice to the untold stories of a community that played a vital role in shaping the nation.

Exhibition highlights:

- rare and restricted historical papers and items
- never-before-seen original photographs
- newly commissioned artworks

Quotes from Minister for the Arts Leanne Enoch:

"This exhibition is a vital opportunity to share the important stories, history and vast cultural contributions of Australian South Sea Islanders."

"I thank the many Queenslanders who told their stories, acknowledging a troubled past of injustice.

"Today, Australian South Sea Islanders have a unique identity in Queensland, which has helped to shape our rich and vibrant culture."

Quotes from State Librarian and CEO Vicki McDonald:

"State Library is proud to shine a light on the untold stories of Australian South Sea Islanders through personal stories and rare collection items."

"The exhibition offers all Queenslanders an opportunity to learn about the Australian South Sea Islanders community whose unique history and identity was forged from exploitation and discrimination."

"Emerging from the sugarcane farms of tropical Queensland to cut a path to freedom, the stories of Australian South Sea Islanders are steeped in strength and resilience."

Media enquiries

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Interviews and images are available upon request.

Plantation Voices: Contemporary conversations with Australian South Sea Islanders

16 Feb — 8 Sep

Open daily | Free entry

Philip Bacon Heritage Gallery, level 4 | State Library of Queensland, Cultural Centre, South Bank
slq.qld.gov.au/whats-on | #slqPlantationVoices

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