

# Editorial

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Queensland is an idea whose time has come. The state is experiencing unprecedented economic growth, developing a new self-confidence and playing a more prominent role in national and regional affairs. The new government slogan, the 'Smart State', cleverly capitalises on changing internal and external perceptions of Queensland, as well as setting an innovative agenda for the future. Premier Peter Beattie points to 'the climate of innovation, education and training, coupled with our low State taxes, high standard of living, great lifestyle and sunny climate' as a particularly attractive base from which to 'develop Queensland as an Asia-Pacific hub for the new industries of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century'.<sup>1</sup>

If such phrases appear to suggest a bias in government policy towards science and technology, it is heartening to note that thinking about the Smart State in fact also encompasses the creative and liberal arts. Arts Queensland is developing a 'Smart State — Creative Queensland' policy. The Department of Innovation and Information Economy too has recognised the importance of the social sciences and the humanities in its recent discussion paper 'Queensland R&D Strategy Issues Paper', which suggests that a key principle of the state's eventual Research and Development policy should be benefit to the community as a whole. The paper argues that the liberal arts help us to understand society, to be creative and artistic, to communicate ideas and values; indeed that '[t]hought and communication arising out of social studies and environmental understandings are the pre-requisites to the development of relevant scientific and technological planning and research'.<sup>2</sup> It also points out the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to emerging creative areas such as multi-media, and to new scientific areas such as psychoneurobiology. What characterises many of today's so-called 'hot sciences' and 'disruptive technologies' is precisely the merging of science and technology with the creative arts, humanities and social sciences.

Queensland now has a significant concentration of political, educational, industrial and research infrastructure, particularly in the South-East but increasingly in regional areas too. Closer international links are being forged, particularly with the Asia Pacific region. We have a diverse population: over 100 ethnic groups make up the population, and there is a strong Indigenous presence. Our environment consists of unique flora, fauna and landforms, and the state has five World Heritage Areas. To date, the potential of the local context for the emerging clean and knowledge-based industries remains largely untapped, although Environmental Studies, Asian Studies and Queensland Studies at Griffith University have helped to mark out distinctive research agendas which link Queensland communities, infrastructure and expertise into national and international contexts.

As Queensland moves towards a new economy, it is important that we see our heritage, including the diverse backgrounds of our population, as a resource which can also contribute to our future. Recent archival discoveries and new, more inclusive perspectives on the past have greatly affected the way we can now see our history. Our understandings of colonisation, of relations between Indigenous people and immigrants, of the environment and economic development, and of the role of women have changed dramatically over the last decade. However, despite a wealth of research into particular aspects of our past, there is no up-to-date and comprehensive study of Queensland history. For the Centenary of self-government in 1959, Sir Raphael Cilento and Clem Lack compiled *Triumph in the Tropics: An Historical Sketch of Queensland*, which has been long superseded both in information and approach. The current standard work, Ross Fitzgerald's two volume *A History of Queensland* (1982-84), is 20 years old.

We need new historical studies which build on recent research and contemporary perspectives on the past to explain how Queensland and Queenslanders have been shaped by regional, cultural, ethnic and gender diversity. We need work which promotes a sense of not one but several 'Queensland traditions' — some extending back over many generations, others of much more recent origin; some distinctive to particular localities, others reflecting Queensland as a whole. Through such projects we can begin to reconstruct the distinctive as well as the shared histories of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Queenslanders, of the city and the bush, of men and women. If we wish the Queensland of the future to respect and build on our unique physical, social and human resources, we must be aware of our past in all its complexity.

Researching and writing history depends to a large extent on the survival of documents, and adequate government support for archival repositories — particularly Queensland State Archives and the State Library of Queensland — should be a key component of Smart State planning and funding. Preserving documents and making them accessible in fact makes more sense than ever in information-based economies. Queensland's archives — which date back to 1859 — provide a statistically significant snapshot of a modern multi-ethnic population. The state is therefore in a position to take advantage of a growing international interest in research projects which require good population records to generate and analyse databases, using interdisciplinary teams of researchers with expertise in diverse fields such as medicine, statistics, history and anthropology. Examples of this type of research include studies of suicide patterns, genetics, the effects of social and economic change on populations, people movements, and the impact of medical interventions. Queensland State Archives and other repositories represent an excellent resource for such studies, and they need to be maintained, developed and modernised through the application of advanced technologies for preservation and access.

Queensland's archives include not just text-based documents, but also images, particularly photographs. Visual records of the past are important not only for historians, but increasingly for a range of other researchers. Software that 'reads' and searches images in graphic, as opposed to text-based ways, is now emerging: it will transform the ways in which it is possible to search and analyse large digital

image collections, with applications for disciplines ranging from history to medicine. Commercially, there is a race to acquire and control ‘visual content’: Mark Getty’s Getty Image, Bill Gates’ Corbis and Eastman Kodak’s The Image Bank are the leading players.

In Queensland, digitisation of image collections lags behind other countries and even other Australian states: to date, for instance, only one small Queensland collection has a presence on the Picture Australia web site at [www.pictureaustralia.org](http://www.pictureaustralia.org). Images are a valuable resource, in a number of different ways. A visit to the John Oxley Library reading room suffices to demonstrate how significant a resource they represent to Indigenous people tracing families and communities dispersed through colonisation. Scientists use photographs to identify and analyse environmental changes. Historians regularly supplement text-based records with visual evidence. Making images of Queensland accessible on a large scale has the potential to transform some of our understandings of the past — and, as the involvement of Mark Getty, Bill Gates and Eastman Kodak in the so-called ‘visual content industry’ reminds us, digitised collections also have considerable commercial potential in a world hungry for images.

This issue of *Queensland Review* explores representations of Queensland in art and literature, with a particular emphasis on images. I am delighted to publish, with the assistance of the Queensland Art Gallery, a collection of six essays on Conrad Martens’ journey to Brisbane and the Darling Downs in 1851–52, with illustrations from the work of Martens and others. These essays, which are introduced in more detail by Glenn R. Cooke, Julie Ewington and Lynne Seear of the Queensland Art Gallery, focus on Conrad Martens as a ‘recorder’ of the landscape of early colonial Brisbane and the Darling Downs. They are followed by an essay by Patricia Clarke on Rosa Praed’s representations in her fiction of the Queensland Shearers’ Strikes of the 1890s. Clarke — author of *Rosa, Rosa!* (1999) and a number of other biographies of Australian women — looks at Praed as a ‘recorder’ of a critical moment in the history of Queensland, as well as of labour in Australia. Her article too is accompanied by a number of photographs and drawings. This edition concludes with reviews of some recent publications relating to Queensland.

*Belinda McKay*

## Notes

- 1 Peter Beattie, ‘Queensland is Australia’s Smart State’, <http://www.thepremier.qld.gov.au/smartstate/index.htm> (updated 23 May 2002).
- 2 *Queensland R&D Strategy Issues Paper* (Brisbane: Department of Innovation and Information Technology, [2002]).