

# Treasure of the Month

## Q150 Ephemera Collection

In 2009 Queensland celebrated its Q150 year to mark the anniversary of its establishment as a self-governing colony. It was an opportunity, the Premier told us on the government's Q150 web page, "to take stock, reflect back, think ahead and move forward". But what physical and digital artefacts will be left behind when the party is over? Will these artefacts be evidence of that process having taken place? Do they articulate a sense of what Queensland was and is?

We tend now to see souvenirs of earlier celebrations, the jubilee and the centenary, as somewhat quaint historical oddities. They trumpet Queensland's "Triumph in the Tropics" to borrow from the title of the 1959 centenary history by Sir Raphael Cilento and Clem Lack, and unreservedly herald the achievements of long dead pioneers – almost exclusively male and white.

Fryer has accumulated an array of Q150 related memorabilia - programmes, photographs, souvenirs, invitations and book flyers. What might future generations of researchers make of them? If they reflect Queensland as it is now, what would the pioneers and the administrators and planners from the 1909 and 1959 celebrations make of what we have become? Would they appreciate the opportunities that Q150 offered government departments and cultural agencies to gear up, raise their public profile and hopefully boost the coffers with some much needed funding?

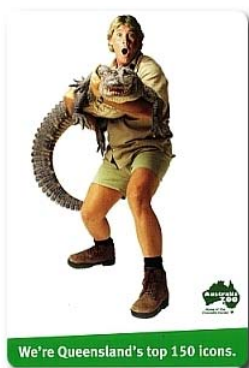
One of the by-products of the 1959 celebrations was the appointment of a **State Archivist**. Queensland State Archives has made the running in the creation of exhibitions of the "Top 150" documents from our history and "Queensland firsts: 50 milestones that shaped the state" making that which was once relatively unattainable now very public.

The themes of public access, outreach and community participation prevail too in the Q150 "Official Program". Q150, it tells us, is a celebration of "our people, our places, our stories". There is no space for elitism here and, with the exception of the commemorative *Made in Queensland* history by Fitzgerald, Megarity and Symons, little space for erudition.

The Q150 Steam Train Souvenir Program contains sepia-toned photographs and other "heritage" iconography from earlier centuries. A sense of the past is evident but it is clear from the text that events coordinators and marketers now "run the show" and not the President of the Royal Historical Society. When the Premier tells us this is an opportunity to "take stock" the marketers take her at her word. They "take stock" and they move it off the shelves - pronto. Google "Q150" and the first hit you get after the official website provides details of the "Unlimited Entry Pass to Warner Brothers Movie World".



Image courtesy of The State of Queensland (Department of the Premier and Cabinet) 2009

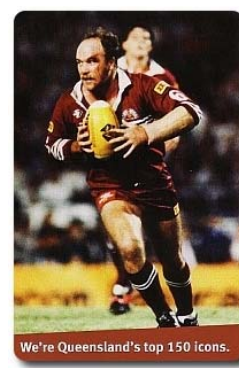


We're Queensland's top 150 icons.

The popular touch is in evidence in the collection of the 150 Queensland icons. They were publicly voted for. You won't find Thomas McIlwraith on the list, nor will you find Samuel Griffith or T.J. Ryan. Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen made it, but with the exception of Clem Jones he was the only politician. Does this say something profound about what Queenslanders think about those who govern them?

What might we make of the image of a bruised and bloodied Wally Lewis in a Maroons footy jumper stepping off the back foot with the ball held in both hands? Is he looking to off-load or are we, like the Blues defenders, just being sold the dummy?

There is also the extraordinary image of Steve Irwin cradling a crocodile in his arms (as if you would!) along with the (contractually obligated?) Australia Zoo official icon.



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Will future generations appreciate the force of the shock wave which hit us on that fateful day in September 2006 when the news of Irwin's death was announced? All over the country talk back radio lines ran hot with a public looking to articulate their grief.

Dame Nellie Melba performed at the 1909 jubilee. The 1959 celebration was marked by a state reception for HRH Princess Alexandra at the once iconic but now departed Cloudland Ballroom.

What might Governor Bowen, or past organisers of celebrations make of the 2009 Proclamation Day celebration? It's being capped off with Q150 icon Powderfinger rocking the Riverstage. The music would be foreign to them and the cranked amps and crashing drums probably repulsive, but if they took their fingers from their ears for a moment they might empathise with the sentiment when they hear the crowd join the chorus on one of the band's biggest hits and sing: "These days turned out nothing like I had planned"

**Mark Cryle, Project Manager, Queensland's Past Online**



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