

ALIA NT Recognition Award



The A Territory Story exhibition at the Northern Territory Library

The ALIA NT Recognition Award has this year been won jointly by the Northern Territory Library for its exhibition, *A Territory Story*, and the Youth Team of the Alice Springs Public Library. Having joint winners for this award is a first, and ANNEKE BARNES, along with JAYSHREE MAMTORA, report on the initiative that resulted in the win for the Northern Territory Library.

The exhibition *A Territory Story* (ATS) was launched in July 2018 at the Northern Territory Library (NTL) and uses the library's collection to celebrate the people, places and events that shaped the Northern Territory. It is the first permanent exhibition that incorporates multiple themes of Northern Territory history and successfully brings together the library's collection of photos, maps, manuscripts, audio visual, and books in one offering.

Using unique story telling through first person narratives, touch and interactive maps, a model replica of a tourism bus and multiple interactive touch screens for song, story and video, the exhibition successfully brings to life the library collection and a history of the Northern Territory.

A Territory Story presents the variety and richness of Northern Territory history through ten unique themes being: Larrakia Country, Courage, Tracks and Mapping, All Aboard, Territory Made, Home, Check it Out, Territorians, Darwin, and Territory Classics.

The exhibition shares the history of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures in the Northern Territory and the success of this innovative approach has been widely recognised as is illustrated through comments in the visitor's book, media and critical responses such as that by Dr Annemarie McLaren in *Inside Story* (bit.ly/2Sxti9W).

The development of the exhibition began in 2015 in response to the community's strong interest in Northern Territory history, but at that time there was no opportunity for either visitors or locals to get a broad overview of the major themes of Territory development in the one location.

Community links and partnerships were created or strengthened during the development of the exhibition through consultation. These links and collaborations helped to reinforce the library's position as a research library across community organisations and members of the public.

The exhibition's integrated approach was only been achieved following extensive consultation with Aboriginal peoples and community representatives – including the Northern Territory Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation; and Larrakia Nation – this consultative approach has resulted in Aboriginal visitors to the exhibition engaging more closely with the content.

The exhibition demonstrates NTL's dedication to the advancement of libraries as multi-use, community spaces where curiosity and investigation are encouraged. Initial survey results show that 83 percent of the people who visited ATS had their interest in finding out more about the Northern Territory sparked. The exhibition has become an anchor for a number of public programs, including regular floor talks, specialised tours and Treasure Talks. The library has also developed an education program for school students that use it as the basis for curriculum-based activities.

As well as onsite activities, NTL has creatively repurposed content from the exhibition for digital presentations that are showcased in the 'Explore NT History' section on the library website (ntl.nt.gov.au). This repurposed material allows the library's collection to be accessed not just to those visiting the NTL but for anyone interested in Northern Territory history. 🌐

ANNEKE BARNES

Assistant Director – Collections and Engagement
Northern Territory Library

JAYSHREE MAMTORA AFALIA (DCP)

ALIA Awards Coordinator