



## QAR PROJECT UPDATE: February 2020

### The diversity of religious belief and practice in Queensland is the focus of a major new University of Queensland research project.

During 2019 researchers in the UQ School of Historical & Philosophical Inquiry were awarded an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant to develop a Queensland Atlas of Religion (QAR) in partnership with the State Library of Queensland.

The new project will investigate, document and interpret the diversity of religion and religious practices in Queensland's past and present. It will generate the first major scholarly treatment of religions in Queensland via a large public reference website, to be published in late 2022.

The QAR project will involve four PhD projects, a state-wide project reference group for community input and a range of regional research initiatives. Interviews and appointments for the PhD projects began in late 2019, with two positions being filled by February 2020 (*see below*).

This is the first QAR Project Update, which will be issued three times a year in February, July and November over the life of the project.

### *What is an Atlas of Religion?*

The QAR is the first time that a place-based approach has been used to study Queensland's religious pluralism and diversity.

The Atlas will present stories of people and communities across Queensland, including those of all faith traditions, with an emphasis on oral history and significant places. Case studies and interviews will aim to explore

the complex patterns of historical accommodation and inclusion needed to inform religious toleration and cross-community understanding today. In generating new knowledge, the Atlas will present its findings in a free public website.

It builds on UQ's earlier success in developing major public reference websites such as the *Queensland Historical Atlas*, *Queensland Places* and *Queensland Speaks*, all developed by researchers at UQ since 2007. These are free resources for all users.

See: <https://hpi.uq.edu.au/research/digital-resources-and-research>



*Islamic Centre and West End Mosque, Brisbane*

### *The story so far*

The project began in 2017, when researchers at UQ's School of Historical & Philosophical Inquiry gained seed funding from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. This funding supported five regional forums across Queensland in 2018, in Logan, Townsville,

Gladstone, Toowoomba and Brisbane, organised by Jess White. Each forum was a small step in establishing the local relationships that will be essential to the QAR's success.

A Community Reference Group was established through these regional forums, with email contacts for community groups, representatives and potential contributors to the Atlas.

This work was done with the active support of the State Library of Queensland, through the Director of Queensland Memory, Gavin Bannerman. The relationship between UQ and SLQ developed through a shared commitment to capturing Queensland's religious diversity, and respect for the stories of people and communities. An emphasis on community-based oral history and the documentation of sites and narratives emerged as a core element of the project.

An application was submitted to the Australian Research Council in December 2018, which in July 2019 awarded the project \$252,000 (over three years) under the very competitive ARC Linkage scheme. Further funding support has been generously provided by UQ and SLQ. The project formally commenced in October 2019 with an overview presentation at the Oral History Association of Australia Conference, held at the State Library of Queensland.

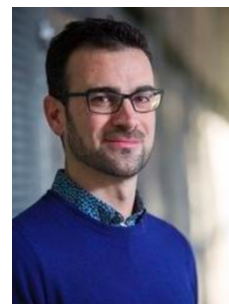
### ***Introducing the UQ project team***

Assoc. Prof. Geoff Ginn and Dr Adam Bowles (left, and below right) are the QAR project leaders. Geoff is a Queensland public historian, and has published on the history of religion in Britain and Australia. Adam researches Ancient Indian Sanskrit texts, Buddhism and Hinduism, and is the Convenor for the Studies in Religion program at UQ.



Dr Tom Aechtner and Dr Ryan Williams (left, and below right) are both UQ lecturers in Studies in Religion. Tom works on the sociology of religion, science/religion debates and religious diasporas.

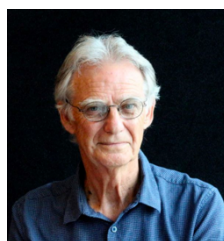
Ryan has published research on Islam in a variety of social and cultural contexts.



Dr Shirin Jamarani (below left) is a specialist on the social experiences of Queensland Muslim women, and Dr Richard Martin (below right) is an anthropologist with expertise in the Aboriginal communities of the Gulf, Native Title and Indigenous cultural heritage.



Prof. Phil Almond (below) is one of the leading scholars of religion in Australia, with many books on subjects such as Christianity, theology and related subjects. Prof. Peter Spearritt (below right) is a historian with long-term interests in social history, historic places and heritage.



Dr Val Cooms (below) is a historian of Australian Indigenous policy and activism, and is a former member of the National Native Title Tribunal.



Gavin Bannerman (right) represents the project at the State Library of Queensland.





### ***PhD projects in the pipeline***

Four research scholarships have been funded by UQ in supporting the Queensland Atlas of Religion project. These are:

**‘Aboriginal Christianity in Queensland: a comparative perspective’** supervised by Dr Richard Martin and Prof. David Trigger. This anthropological project (intended for an Indigenous researcher) will take three to four case studies of major evangelisation activity across multiple generations in Queensland, and trace the significance of particular Christian traditions in relation to conversion experiences, inter-generational patterns of religious activity, and the significance of church membership as an aspect of Aboriginal identity.



*Sri Selva Vinayakar Temple, South Maclean*

**‘South Asian Immigration and Religious Diversity in Queensland, 1975-2018’** supervised by Dr Adam Bowles and Dr Ryan Williams. This project will capture changes that have occurred due to accelerating rates of immigration from South Asia in the last 30-40 years, which accounts for Hinduism currently being the fastest growing religion in Australia. Islam, Sikhism and Jainism are also important dimensions for consideration. The central problem in this study will be assessing the factors that have influenced how South Asian communities within Queensland have established and maintained religious practices in various community settings. It will include an assessment of transnational identities, social hubs and networks, and civic participation.

**‘Islam and Queensland: assessing generational patterns’** supervised by Dr Ryan Williams and Dr Tom Aechtner. This project traces the deep history of the Muslim community in Queensland, setting Islam’s largely marginalised history against the dynamics of recent diasporic arrivals from various parts of the globe (Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia). In keeping with other analyses of diasporic religious communities, this study will explore factors of community cohesion, civic participation and identity amid the dislocations and challenges of migrant experience.

**‘Charismatic Christianity: explanations and implications’** supervised by Prof. Philip Almond and Dr Tom Aechtner. Unlike many Christian denominations in the Queensland setting, the numbers and influence of charismatic Christian churches is growing. The best-known example is the Pentecostal (Australian Christian Churches, or ACC); of the eight ‘Mega-churches’ associated with the ACC in Australia, which attract 2,000 individuals to services per week, four of them are in Queensland. The study aims to capture the key factors that explain the burgeoning popularity of this contemporary religious phenomenon.



*St John's Lutheran Church, Bundaberg*

## Community Reference Group

As a result of the five Community Forums and other discussions, the QAR team has now established initial links with a number of partners in developing the project.

As well as individual historians, scholars and community bodies, the project has connected with research groups such as the Queensland Professional Historians Association, the Queensland Muslim Historical Association and the Brisbane chapter of the Salvation Army Historical Society. Peak bodies and centres have also indicated an interest, such as the Queensland Faith Communities Council, the Griffith University Centre for Interfaith Dialogue, the Ethnic Communities Council of Logan, the Gladstone Regional Interfaith Network, the Jewish Board of Guardians and others. This is not a complete list, and the project team are looking forward to working with these and other partners as the Atlas develops.

New contributors and interested parties are very welcome to become involved, either through writing content, contributing to data or source collection, or by joining the Community Reference Group. Please email either Geoff Ginn ([g.ginn@uq.edu.au](mailto:g.ginn@uq.edu.au)) or Adam Bowles ([a.bowles1@uq.edu.au](mailto:a.bowles1@uq.edu.au)).

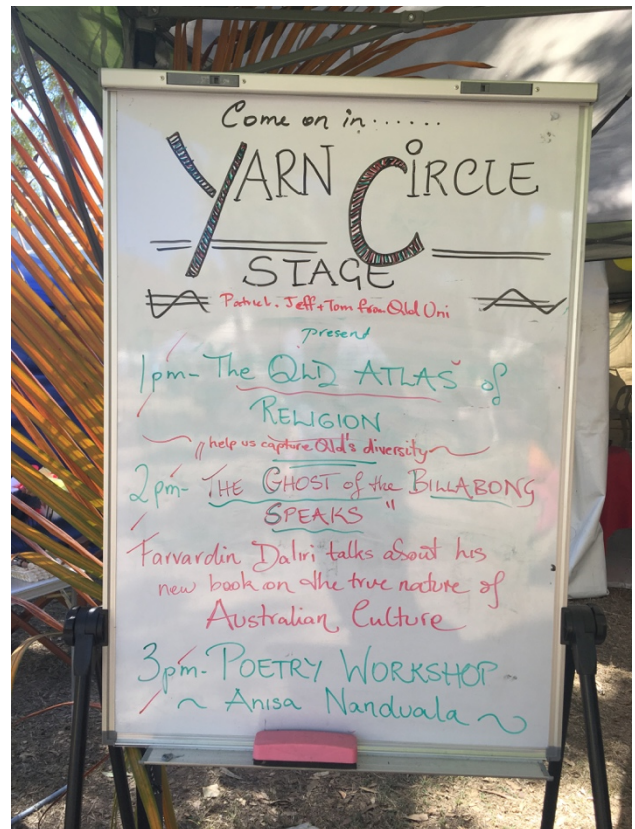
### Find us on Instagram

Our social media presence is a work in progress, as we source images and places of religious significance, stories and associations throughout Queensland. Search for qarel\_uq, or 'Queensland Atlas of Religion'.



## Interested? Finding out more

For further information about the QAR project, to get involved or to make suggestions, please email: Geoff Ginn ([g.ginn@uq.edu.au](mailto:g.ginn@uq.edu.au)) or Adam Bowles ([a.bowles@uq.edu.au](mailto:a.bowles@uq.edu.au)).



The QAR at the Townsville Cultural Fest, August 2018.