

# Media Release

## Australia's first celebrities come to Tura Marrang Library in travelling display **1-15 December**

Before they became celebrated Australian icons, the koala and waratah left early colonists almost 'star struck' by their unique appearance!

Explore how the koala and the waratah were first depicted over 200 years ago, and how they have evolved over time to quickly become national icons in a new travelling display opening at the Tura Marrang Library from 1 - 15 December.

According to Australian Inspiration curator Sarah Morley, "The koala was so unique that early colonists found it difficult to draw – In 1803, Australian artist John William Lewin (1770-1819) was the first person to draw a koala, from a specimen that was brought from Mount Kembla to Sydney."

The koala evolved over time to become a national icon. "Dorothy Wall brought the koala to life in 1933 with her cheeky little character called Blinky Bill, and by the 1960s it was used by Qantas to promote Australian tourism," said Ms Morley.

The waratah has had a similarly fascinating journey that helped establish an Australian national identity and give NSW its state flower.

The earliest known drawing dates back to 1794 and it continues to be a source of inspiration for fashion designers, artists and creatives.

"Australian Inspiration will not only tell the evolving story of our national icons, but also showcase the role of the State Library's extraordinary collections in arts and design," said Ms Morley.

### Highlights of the Australian Inspiration display include:

- some of the earliest known drawings of Australian flora and fauna;
- Dorothy Wall's drawing of Blinky Bill and her earlier characters in Tommy Bear and the Zookies from c.1920; and
- a quirky waratah costume design created for the 1938 Sesquicentenary of Australia.

**Sarah Morley is available for interviews.**

For more information, interviews and images, please contact:  
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