



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA  
DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

Ms Melanie Brocklehurst  
Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Brocklehurst

Thank you for your letter of 5 September 2017 inviting the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) to make a submission to the Committee's inquiry into the proliferation of inauthentic Aboriginal 'style' art.

DPS welcomes the inquiry into the proliferation of inauthentic Indigenous 'styles' of art in the sale of art works and application in product design. As a purchaser of works of art for the DPS managed Parliament House Art Collection, and retailer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and craft products and merchandise through The Parliament Shop, DPS actively supports the trade of work by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, and I am pleased to provide the following information to the Committee.

In 2016–2017 DPS welcomed 759,005 visitors, including 127,000 school students, to Australian Parliament House. These visitors engage with art works from the Parliament House Art Collection, experience our exhibitions and events, undertake our guided tours, and many enter The Parliament Shop. When public visitation is combined with 2,000 regular building occupants, growing to more than 5,000 building occupants on a Parliamentary sitting week, close to one million people can view artworks from the PHAC and patronise The Parliament Shop over the course of a year.

In its role as both a collecting institution and a retailer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, craft and retail merchandise, DPS recognises its responsibility to provide the public with ethically sourced and produced Indigenous art works and art-related products.

#### **Sourcing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander product for The Parliament Shop**

Currently The Parliament Shop sells a selection of products featuring licensed Indigenous designs as well as original artwork by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. All Indigenous products on sale in the shop have been sourced either directly from Indigenous suppliers or from companies who have valid license agreements in place with artists and art centres to reproduce Indigenous artwork on mass produced goods.

In the 2016–17 year The Parliament Shop sourced a range of goods directly from Indigenous art centre suppliers. Products in this category include original art, artist-signed prints, homewares, cards, clothing and accessories. Total remuneration paid directly to Indigenous business in the period was \$7,853. The Parliament Shop also sourced a range of products from reputable third party businesses who maintain licencing arrangements with Indigenous artists to reproduce their original artworks. Total remuneration paid to these third party businesses was \$34,310.

## **Identifying authentic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and design products**

In May 2015, DPS became a member of the Indigenous Art Code (IAC) and upholds the principles of the IAC in acquiring art for the Parliament House Art Collection and sourcing product for The Parliament Shop. To ensure consistent application of the IAC recommendations, The Parliament Shop conducts an annual review - most recently undertaken in January 2017 - of the stock of Indigenous art and products which feature licensed designs by Indigenous artists to ensure that all products comply with the IAC.

All new and existing suppliers of retail products for The Parliament Shop that feature Indigenous designs must be able to demonstrate the integrity of the artwork used. Assessment criteria are based on the IAC guidelines and include the reputation of the art centre or supplier; whether they are a member of the IAC; the artist's credit and biographical information supplied; and, included on the product or packaging, information about the regional art style, the story expressed within the specific artwork, and the licensing arrangement with the artist and/or art centre which guarantees that there is an appropriate royalty arrangement in place with the artist or art centre for the use/reproduction of their design.

Attendance by DPS Parliament House Art Collection staff at Indigenous art events also builds relationships and direct understanding of general issues as well as specific reputations of commercial operators in the field. The Parliament House Art Collection staff provide The Parliament Shop with advice in the identification and selection of original artworks to ensure that they are sourced ethically and that the artists receive maximum benefit from the sale of their work. They also provide assistance in the negotiation of licensing arrangements for the creation of new merchandise for The Parliament Shop, which features work from the Parliament House Art Collection by Indigenous artists. For example, DPS negotiated a license for the painting "Possum and Wallaby Dreaming" by Michael Nelson Jagamara, to create a jigsaw puzzle. The image was licensed by Aboriginal Artists Agency as the representative for the artist, and a royalty figure paid for the initial production run of 2,000 units. Additional licensing fees are paid to the artist's agent for every single use of the design and for each additional production of merchandise.

Through such means, shop management is alert to the presence of inauthentic indigenous art products or those made, both in Australia and overseas, or marketed by processes that are not supportive of Indigenous artists. In such instances artists are unlikely to be credited or, if done, this can be vague. The product is often generic in appearance and not linked to any geographically or culturally identified area. While The Parliament Shop has sold products of this type in the past, most were discontinued following a major review of the entire shop range in 2013. Since this time, and after joining the IAC in 2015, shop management has further reviewed existing and new products in accordance with IAC criteria and informed by the Parliament House Art Collection staff with strong knowledge of Indigenous art, artists and art centres. The Parliament Shop no longer trades in Indigenous products that do not meet IAC criteria.

As a further response to this inquiry, DPS has now identified ways to further improve our processes, in particular by educating visitors and building occupants about the importance of authentic Indigenous art experiences and products by providing explicit information about our relevant processes.

## **Acquisition of artworks for the Parliament House Art Collection**

Artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists comprise 20% of the contemporary art in the Parliament House Art Collection which is on continuous rotating display throughout the building in the public and private areas and within parliamentarians' suites.

In its management of the Parliament House Art Collection and in the development of the collection, DPS adheres to the Charter of Principles for publicly funded collecting institutions. This charter covers best practice policies and procedures in the acquisition, commissioning, display and loan of artworks and in the management of significant cultural objects by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and our commitment to the Charter is on the APH website:

[http://www.aph.gov.au/Visit\\_Parliament/Art/About](http://www.aph.gov.au/Visit_Parliament/Art/About)

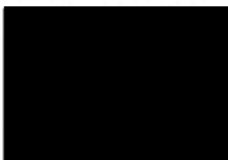
DPS does not purchase works of art for the Parliament House Art Collection on the secondary market i.e. at auction and is committed to buying works of art by Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander artists at the first point of sale i.e. directly from the artist, art centre or from a nominated and accredited gallery or dealer. In purchasing works of art for the collection from commercial entities, DPS ensures the authenticity of artworks by dealing with galleries who are members of the IAC, the Art Galleries Association of Australia (AGAA) and/or the Australian Commercial Galleries Association (ACGA). DPS staff that manage the Parliament House Art Collection also attend a range of events including the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair, DesertMob and the Tarnanthi Festival with a view to strengthening DPS' engagement with the Indigenous art sector and to identify acquisitions and potential product for The Parliament Shop. In 2016–17 year the Parliament House Art Collection spent \$137,585 on the purchase of artworks by, and payment of copyright royalties to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.

#### **Options to promote authentic Indigenous art products and restrict the prevalence of inauthentic products and merchandise**

DPS supports the direction of the Committee in conducting this inquiry and thanks the Committee for the opportunity to make a submission. While DPS' processes to ensure the integrity of Indigenous art, craft and merchandise sourced for the Parliament House Art Collection and The Parliament Shop are being pro-actively managed, DPS is aware that across the giftware and souvenir industry as a whole, the presence of inauthentic art and design is a significant problem. In addition, not all collecting organisations or retailers have access to relevant staff expertise and retail industry networks. Voluntary industry codes and awareness campaigns, while positive, will not alone significantly reduce the practice of art appropriation and sale of goods to customers unaware of the issues.

I welcome and support measures which raise awareness of this issue, will prevent or reduce the manufacture, supply, circulation and sale of inauthentic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'style' art and craft products and merchandise; that will facilitate accessible means for collectors and retailers to identify, participate in and promote best practice in the industry; and make it easier for consumers to be confident that they are purchasing a genuine product. Accordingly, I offer to assist the Committee in any way that can support this important inquiry.

Yours sincerely



Rob Stefanic  
Secretary

10 October 2017