

‘The growing presence of inauthentic Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander style art & craft for sale across Australia’

An Enquiry by the Australian Parliament

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Indigenous_Affairs/The_growing_presence_of_inauthentic_Aboriginal_and_Torres_Strait_Islander_style_art_and_craft

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The Aboriginal Artists Agency Ltd (AAA) (established 1976) is a not-for-profit company handling the intellectual property of Indigenous artists by way of individual agreements with copyright holders.

Through it, licences have been set up between artists and/or wholesalers, retailers & manufacturers for the creation of merchandise for sale. Examples abound in Australian public museums and art galleries: a typical range might include exhibition catalogues, post cards, greeting cards, limited edition prints, jigsaw puzzles etc. Royalties are paid in advance in most cases.

Outstanding examples of successful licensing agreements between Indigenous artists and corporations and government include the following:

- forecourt mosaic for Parliament House Canberra (1985, Parliament House Construction Authority)
- Google Art Project (aka: Google Cultural Institute) for National Gallery of Australia, National Gallery of Victoria, Art Gallery of NSW, Art Gallery of South Australia, Museum Victoria et al

In other words, fair and appropriate commercial arrangements to create an income for artists from such activities have been in place for some decades.

Currently the Australian souvenir industry often eschews our style of agreement and seeks to make its own deals which are no doubt more profitable for both the wholesaler and the retailer. This laissez-faire situation has led to the introduction of ‘inauthentic’ Aboriginal & TSI style art & craft across the country’s tourist outlets and galleries. This has cost Indigenous artists a great deal.

We support the aims and terms of reference of the ENQUIRY and hope that some options to tighten existing regulation under the Trade Practices Act be attempted, at the very least, so that the public are not misled when seeking to buy art and craft by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.

Lazy opportunists must be stopped in their tracks when fair, equitable alternatives are easy to establish across the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts in trade and commerce.

The growing presence of inauthentic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander style art and craft products and merchandise
for sale across Australia.
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