

Chapter 4

Art centres

To a large extent the Indigenous visual arts sector has been built on the backbone of the Indigenous art centres which provide crucial support and development for Indigenous artists. Indigenous art centres often play a key role in bringing economic returns to Indigenous artists and their communities.¹

4.1 Art centres lie at the heart of the blossoming Australian Indigenous visual arts sector. They have facilitated the communication of the creative work of thousands of Indigenous Australians to the wider Australian community and the world. This chapter describes art centres, their roles and functions, and issues raised in the inquiry regarding them.

4.2 It is recognised that the Indigenous arts and craft sector is not only comprised of the artists and art centres in the regional and remote locations of the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. There are also established and developing Indigenous arts and craft industries in urban and regional centres where artists and support organisations play an important role in bringing greater recognition of the diversity of Indigenous cultures in Australia. The committee received little evidence in this area, but it is the subject of the following chapter.

What is an art centre?

4.3 Many of the works of Indigenous artists in rural and remote areas are created and sold through the Indigenous art centres. There are at least 110 of these centres around the country.² The term 'art centre' refers to an Indigenous owned and operated entity, generally located on an Indigenous community. They are typically managed by a board comprising local Indigenous people and operate as not-for-profit entities distributing benefits to stakeholders who are local Indigenous artists. Usually they act as an agent for the production and sale of art works for community members.³

4.4 The art centres themselves differ considerably in size and structure:

Some are open-sided, vast tin sheds providing shelter from the beating sun and tropical rains; others are more sophisticated, with architect-designed buildings and air-conditioned storage and display areas. Some were set up or double as women's centres where women can escape family and other

1 Arts Law Centre of Australia, *Submission 36*, p. 4.

2 DCITA, *Submission 50*, p. 2; NAVA, *National Indigenous Art Commercial Code of Conduct, Discussion Paper*, Section 1, Introduction, NAVA, Sydney, 2006, p. 7, <http://www.visualarts.net.au/advicecentre/codesofpracticeandprotocols/indigenouscommercial>, accessed January 2007.

3 Desart, *Submission 49*, p. 7.

pressures... A number of art centres encourage visitors and have a display area with works hanging and stacked against the wall... Others prefer to operate at 'arm's length' and do not encourage large groups of visitors.⁴

Some art centres do not buy in their artists' work and consequently the artists have to wait for the dealer to sell to remit the funds. This is in direct contrast to Papunya Tula who buy in their artists' work.⁵

4.5 Most art centres are supported through four peak bodies:

- ANKAAA, the Association of Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists, is the peak advocacy and support agency for Indigenous artists and 38 Indigenous owned art centres across four regions of the Top End – the Tiwi Islands, Kimberley, Arnhem Land and the Darwin/Katherine regions. Its core mission is to:
 - support the continuing development of a strong Indigenous arts industry for Indigenous artists by ensuring its members have a strong and respected voice in the Arts industry;
 - improve the standard and quality of life for Indigenous artists and assist its membership in cultural and arts maintenance; and
 - work together to support the development of strong and sustainable indigenous owned art centres.⁶
- Desart, the Association of Central Australian Art and Craft Centres, has 52 full, associate and individual members. Its member art centres must be Aboriginal owned and managed by Aboriginal executive. Its mission is to:
 - work together to create stronger Indigenous artists, stronger Aboriginal-owned art centres and stronger, sustainable industry practice;
 - support Indigenous artists in Central Australia develop the skills, knowledge and ability to make informed and meaningful decisions;
 - create an Indigenous arts industry that offers the potential for Indigenous people to improve their quality of life and achieve their aspirations; and
 - build an Indigenous arts industry that has great business practice and offers pathways for all the different Aboriginal-owned art centres to grow.⁷
- Ananguku Arts and Culture Aboriginal Corporation (known as Ku Arts) represents artists of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands in the far

4 Susan McCulloch, *Contemporary Aboriginal Art: A Guide to the Rebirth of an Ancient Culture*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1999, pp 42–43.

5 Lauraine Diggins Fine Art, *Submission 26*, p. 2. Maningrida Arts and Culture art centre purchases all works by member artists. See *Submission 51*.

6 ANKAAA, *Submission 63*, p. 2.

7 Desart web site, <http://www.desart.com.au/about/index.htm>, accessed 16 April 2007.

north-west of South Australia and has a membership of some 400 residents of the ten major communities and homelands in the region.⁸ Its principal objectives are to:

- provide enhanced economic opportunity for artists through the making and selling of art;
 - increase the viability and sustainability of arts practice;
 - secure appropriate resources for the development of viable and sustainable arts practice;
 - provide increased arts practice opportunities for young people and men;
 - use contemporary arts practice as a means for effecting intergenerational cultural knowledge transfer and maintaining and extending cultural knowledge;
 - support the development of skills, experience and opportunities necessary for Indigenous people to direct and manage their arts practice and enterprise; and
 - develop and provide services, practices and procedures that support effective arts-based economic and cultural development towards the creation of more sustainable and independent communities.⁹
- UMI Arts was established in late 2005 to support artists and craftspeople from Mount Isa, across the Gulf of Carpentaria, Cape York and the Torres Strait.¹⁰ The organisation aims to support and promote Indigenous artists and craftspeople who live and work in far north Queensland and to support, maintain and promote the unique cultures in the region.¹¹

4.6 Art centres lie at the heart of Indigenous visual arts and play a vital role in the work of most Indigenous artists.¹² Art centres are generally owned and controlled by Indigenous people and facilitate the production of art by Indigenous people.¹³

The Art Centre provides, firstly, a focus for the maintenance of the culture of the region. It is a place where artists can congregate, check each other's progress, seek opinions, joke and argue among themselves, paint, eat biscuits and drink tea, socialize, jump on the computer, make travel plans, undertake house-keeping tasks they would never perform in their own

8 Ananguku Arts & Culture Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission 46*, p. 1.

9 Ananguku Arts & Culture Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission 46*, p. 2.

10 Umi Arts web site, www.umiarts.com.au, accessed 16 April 2007; DCITA web site, [http://archive.dcita.gov.au/2005/10/artbeat_spring_2005/indigenous\)arts_agency_launched_in_far_north_queensland](http://archive.dcita.gov.au/2005/10/artbeat_spring_2005/indigenous)arts_agency_launched_in_far_north_queensland), accessed 26 April 2007.

11 Umi Arts web site, www.umiarts.com.au, accessed 16 April 2007.

12 DCITA, *Submission 50*, p. 1.

13 DCITA, *Submission 50*, p. 2;

homes, acquire social skills, and generally escape from the often difficult conditions of community life. The simple fact that these spaces exist is a social benefit that must not be underestimated.¹⁴

4.7 Art centres have two key cultural roles: they facilitate the maintenance of Indigenous culture *within* the community, as well as facilitating the transmission of that culture to the world *beyond* the community.¹⁵

4.8 ANKAAA stated in its submission that it is well recognised by the art centre sector that the role of art centres is far more than the buying and selling of artwork. They often provide many social benefits to the community such as access to Internet banking, assisting with understanding and completing forms, identifying and assisting with health issues such as eye testing, school programs, access to communication, transport, financial management assistance, youth programs, education, and providing a safe and supportive environment for artists and their families. There are also a variety of community development programs that operate in the art centres that are directed at alcohol and substance abuse, often supported through access to other government department programs.¹⁶

4.9 Art centres also provide access to, and support for, art centre workers to participate in formal training programs in areas such as governance training, arts administration, computer, internet and database training, occupational health and safety, use and maintenance of tools such as chainsaws used in the production of carvings, professional fine arts practice in a range of traditional and contemporary mediums, public speaking and presentations, tour guides, sales and promotion, curatorial skills and other identified areas.¹⁷

4.10 In its submission, Desart spelt out the many roles that art centres may perform within a community, noting that while they are primarily places for the creation and development of Aboriginal art – new media, new products, fine arts, painting, batik and fabric, print work, pottery, baskets and punu, tourist artefacts etc – they also may serve the following purposes:

Cultural maintenance

Aboriginal law and culture are the foundation for all the arts and crafts produced and sold at Art Centres and the means whereby Aboriginal identity is further defined and celebrated.

Places of renewal

14 Mr Brian Tucker, *Submission 12*.

15 NAVA, *National Indigenous Art Commercial Code of Conduct, Discussion Paper*, Section 1, Introduction, NAVA, Sydney, 2006, p. 7, <http://www.visualarts.net.au/advicecentre/codesofpracticeandprotocols/indigenouscommercial>, accessed January 2007.

16 ANKAAA, *Submission 63*, p. 9.

17 ANKAAA, *Submission 63*, p. 9.

Art Centres are places where communities can renew culture, values, law and economic integrity. They are places where Aboriginal culture is valued in both worlds. Attachment to country is renewed and strengthened. It is a place where Aboriginal communities can draw upon achievement, and engage with the mainstream community on the basis of this achievement.

As a place of work and earning income

In most communities, Art Centres provide the major, if not the only source of self generated income as well as providing an important platform for cultural maintenance and education. They play an important role in the financial well being of the community.

As a distributor to markets

Some Art Centres focus on the international market, some on the tourist market and some on the collection and distribution of arts and crafts for sale. Some Art Centres maintain galleries on communities, some sell to national and international galleries some sell wholesale, but all Art Centres have to locate their market and distribute their work.

Strengthening the community

A strong Art Centre means a healthy community. Art Centres play an important role in broader family and community social support. The future of communities lies with its youth and this is recognised by many artists. They are seeking a way to engage youth in the activities of Art Centres. Many Art Centres work with schools and kindergartens and play a role in disability support, and programme for petrol sniffers and others. Arts practice is used by some artists to teach bush tucker and healthy eating. In some cases Art Centres work with other community initiatives to grow employment opportunities and skill.

As places of learning

Artists and executive members are not just learners, but also educators, mentors and facilitators. Through their work and their practice they are growing an understanding of Aboriginal law, culture, heritage and history for both Aboriginal people and for others who engage with their work. Art Centres may be engaged in training under CDEP or other arrangements. They are also places where people can learn money story and how to manage things; learn how to 'walk in two worlds'.

Places of respite and care

Art Centres may provide a safe place for older people and women, where one can find company, a cup of tea and support. They also may provide food (breakfast and lunch) and many different informal support roles, from translating documents to arranging accommodation, transport and financial support.¹⁸

4.11 One submitter, Warlayirti Artists, commented that one of the strengths of the art centres model is that they are driven by 'community investment'— investment and commitment to artist careers, investment in the welfare of artists of families, an

18 Desart, *Submission 49, Attachment 2*, pp 10–11.

investment in keeping money within the local region/community and an investment in the long term sustainability of the organisation to keep on supporting artists and their communities for the years to come. While sometimes the short term returns for artists can seem small compared to direct selling to dealers/walk bys, the long term gains and the broader family, community and cultural gains are very strong. Managing the short and long term issues are key factors to the success of the art centre model.¹⁹

4.12 Maningrida Arts and Culture's submission noted that the centre not only supports more than 700 artists, it is a significant local employer of Aboriginal people in the community, employing Aboriginal people to work:

in packing and freight areas, photography, conservation, visual display and [to] conduct tours of the community Museum. Additionally the arts centre engages in cultural maintenance activities including the production of dictionaries, music recording, preservation of the archives, supporting researchers and students, responding to the community's request in respect of Cultural maintenance.²⁰

The production of art in remote communities like Maningrida is often the only non-government money coming through the community and art has an enormous economical impact. For example, in the financial year 05/06, more than 1.1 million was distributed to artists in the Maningrida region. Art is a major success story for Maningrida people, and the self esteem, wellbeing and growing confidence of the artists cannot be overvalued.²¹

4.13 At Waringarri, cultural maintenance is a key benefit of the art centre supporting not only the continuation of cultural practice and learning for young people but also providing education and an opportunity for increased understanding of Indigenous cultural/world views for the broader community. Maintenance of cultural practice is also recognised by the community as a significant contributor in sustaining a cohesive and socially healthy community.²²

4.14 At the Lockhart River Art Centre (LRAC), crafts and artefacts:

provide a small but important supplement to the incomes of many older women in the community. Financial benefits to artists are uneven, with a few doing very well while others derive more modest returns for their efforts. In the long run, in line with the cultural and family obligations prevalent in aboriginal culture, financial benefits end up being more widely spread around the community than can be accurately portrayed here.²³

19 Warlayirti Artists, *Submission 10*, p. 2

20 Maningrida Arts & Culture, *Submission 51*, p. 1.

21 Maningrida Arts & Culture, *Submission 51*, p. 1.

22 Waringarri Aboriginal Arts, *Submission 52*, p. 2.

23 Lockhart River Arts and Cultural Centre, *Submission 67*, p. 1.

4.15 In its submission, the Arts Law Centre of Australia noted that DCITA had recommended in its *Indigenous Arts Centres Strategy and Action Plan* that:

buying art directly from indigenous arts and crafts centres means the majority of income from sales will pass directly to the artists.²⁴

4.16 Other stakeholders in the sector were generally very positive about the art centres:

Art Centres do this by acting as a buffer between the highly competitive art market and the cultural environment of “country”.²⁵

4.17 A wide range of art dealers from whom the committee heard or received submissions were supportive of art centres, including members of Art.Trade,²⁶ members of the Australian Commercial Galleries Association,²⁷ and those who were members of neither.²⁸

4.18 Experts and analysts working in the sector, including Professor Morphy, Professor Altman, and Mr Caruana all recognised the key role of art centres and that they remained critical to the future of Indigenous art.²⁹

4.19 While art centres have a common focus, they come in different shapes and sizes. As DCITA pointed out:

No single art centre ‘model’ exists. Some art centres primarily operate on a studio basis, while others operate on a decentralised basis, buying work produced by artists living in surrounding outstations and communities. The level and extent of professional arts activity coming out of the art centres is diverse, with new art centres continually emerging out of developing arts practice. Some art centres operate as highly successful enterprises while others have more of a community arts development focus.³⁰

4.20 Most art centres are government supported, but one of the largest – Papunya Tula – is not.³¹ When thirty-nine government-supported centres were surveyed in 1999, their governance structures ranged widely:

24 Arts Law Centre of Australia, *Submission 36*, p. 10.

25 Cross Cultural Art Exchange, *Submission 16*, p. 3.

26 See, for example, Mr Martin Wardrop, *Committee Hansard*, 10 April 2007, p. 2; Mr Claude Ullin, *Committee Hansard*, 11 April 2007, pp 43–44.

27 See, for example, Mrs Beverley Knight, *Committee Hansard*, 23 February 2007, p. 3.

28 See, for example, Mr Kevin Kelly, *Committee Hansard*, 19 February 2007, p. 27; Mr AP Bond, *Submission 55*.

29 Professor Howard Morphy, *Committee Hansard*, 9 February 2007, p. 70; Professor Jon Altman, *Submission 11*, p. 9; Mr Wally Caruana, *Submission 31*;

30 DCITA, *Submission 50*, p. 1.

31 Papunya Tula Artists, *Submission 14*, p. 1.

Type of art centre	Number
Independent: incorporated associations	20
Independent: private company	1
Operating under a community council	11
Operating under a company	2
Operating under a women's organisation	2
Operating under other organisations	3

Source: Felicity Wright, *The Art and Craft Centre Story*, vol. 1 (Report), ATSIIC, Canberra, 1999, p. 27.

4.21 Governance of art centres, and the training of art centre staff and boards to ensure good management, were raised during the inquiry as issues (see below). The diversity of structures was not itself seen as a problem, however. Not being separately incorporated was thought by some as exposing centres to problems in some circumstances,³² but the main challenge, regardless of how art centres are organised, is seen to be ensuring that governance and business management is effective.

The limitations of art centres

4.22 Concerns were raised about some aspects of the art centre model and its limitations. Ms Diggins, of Lauraine Diggins Fine Art, stated that her preference has been working directly with art centres. However:

the stability of the centres can be problematic, with the exception of Papunya Tula, which has enjoyed over 20 years stability and reliability. I no longer work with two art centres because one has ceased to operate and the other is dysfunctional.³³

4.23 While acknowledging the many mutually rewarding relationships between galleries, art centres and artists, the Australian Commercial Galleries Association noted that the professionalism and expertise of art centres varies widely and this can cause a number of problems in dealings between galleries and art centres, such as:

In some art centres the personnel may have difficulties in dealing with galleries who have a greater level of experience and sophistication. The dramatic turnover of art centre personnel also means that both Gallerists and art centre managers must re-establish relationships and modes of dealing time after time.

Direct relationships between remote indigenous artists (both old and young) and Gallerists may be discouraged by some art centres. This can mean that

32 For example, Desart, *Submission 49*, Attachment 3 (Report of Organisational Audit, Irrunytju Arts, December 2006).

33 Lauraine Diggins Fine Art, *Submission 26*, p. 1.

the development of the artist's career, especially internationally, can be ad hoc. Gallerists need to be able to develop relationships with artists, so that their representation of those artists reflects an understanding of their community and its future needs and aspirations, both social and economic.

Art centres and artists sometimes compete directly with the galleries who are representing them by offering works for sale to third parties. Where an artwork is sold directly by an artist or an arts centre the artist does not pay GST and, in effect, an automatic 10% discount is therefore received. On top of this they may also offer work for sale at a further discount, thus undermining the market prices being established by the gallery.³⁴

4.24 Some dealers or buyers were critical of suggestions that art centres should be the only source of 'legitimate' Indigenous art, in some cases expressing concern that the market should not be over-regulated.³⁵ It was also noted that not every community has an art centre, and that analysis of and support for the industry needed to take account of this.³⁶

Issues facing art centres

4.25 Despite these few concerns, there was overwhelming support for the work of art centres. They face many challenges in their work, and a number of issues were raised by their supporters. These fell into several overlapping categories:

- governance;
- staff training needs;
- staff retention; and
- infrastructure pressures, including housing needs.

4.26 Many of the issues facing art centres arise from the wide range of work and intense pressures faced by art centre staff and boards. Mr Brian Tucker stated that:

...nothing is more crucial to the artistic, cultural and financial success of the Art Centre than the skill, competence and integrity of the Manager and other staff.

In my experience, Managers will sometimes have come from a marketing background, often, but not always, in Indigenous art; or they may have been a practicing artist or community cultural development worker; or have a curatorial history, or worked in Indigenous communities as a social worker. Rarely will they have financial management skills, although they may have rudimentary bookkeeping experience.

Yet all of these skills are required to successfully manage an Art Centre. Indeed, an Art Centre Manager would ideally be a qualified accountant ...

34 Australian Commercial Galleries Association, *Submission 82*, pp 3–4.

35 See, for example, Dr Ben Korman, *Submission 64*.

36 Identart, *Submission 25A*.

with experience managing a small to medium enterprise, and would have an extensive knowledge of the Australian art scene in general, and the Indigenous market in particular. They would also have extensive computer skills and knowledge of database systems, applied particularly to cataloguing of artwork. They would also be adept at colour mixing, photography, stretching canvases and stock control, to say nothing of the ability to write a convincing grant application...Yet there is no training available for this position, and Managers learn those skills they do not have on the job and from (often bitter) experience.³⁷

Governance

4.27 The importance of effective governance of art centres, and training to support it, was a recurring theme in the inquiry. Creative Economy expressed concern about the lack of 'mentoring or ongoing advice to meet governance responsibilities'.³⁸ State agencies and others were supportive of further governance training.³⁹ Art centres themselves, as well as their peak bodies, frequently drew attention to their needs in this area.⁴⁰ As Mr John Oster put it:

There is no doubt that artists are empowered through art creation. There needs to be a concerted effort though to match this with a genuine improvement in understanding about governance and organisation management. Most of the arts centre failures that we see—and failure is the exception rather than the rule—can be put down to failure of governance in one form or another.⁴¹

Staff training

4.28 A number of submitters referred to the need for training for art centre staff, with one suggestion that:

there needs to be a course of study developed for this occupation, to be delivered on-line or by correspondence, with supplemental residential tutoring/mentoring. Such material should also form the basis for content which could be taken up by interested community members. In respect of the latter, I am unreservedly in favour of the desirability of Indigenous people becoming more involved in the management of community Art Centres. Whether this happens is a moot point. In remote communities, most of the community members, and particularly the artists, have no interest in managing the Art Centre. While one of Flick Wright's reports was titled "I Just Want to Paint" that pretty much describes the attitude of

37 Mr Brian Tucker Accounting, *Submission 12*, p. 7.

38 Creative Economy, *Submission 8*, p. 4.

39 ArtsSA, *Submission 5*; WA Department of Culture and the Arts, *Submission 18*, p. 12.

40 See, for example, Waringarri Arts, *Submission 52*; Mr John Oster, Desart, *Committee Hansard*, 21 February 2007, p. 21.

41 Mr John Oster, Desart, *Committee Hansard*, 21 February 2007, p. 22.

most artists. Given a choice, I suspect most artists would prefer that someone else runs the Art Centre – they are independent (one would hope) of the various community factions, and there is someone to blame, other than themselves, when things go wrong. In the less remote communities, however the potential for Indigenous involvement is much higher, where basic education is more likely, and younger people more motivated to become involved.⁴²

4.29 Mr Tony Oliver of Jirrawun Arts suggested that a program be set up attached to one of the major universities or art schools in the country, for training future arts centre directors:

That school should have a curriculum that has lectures by people in the field who come in—Aboriginal artists. It would be a great postgraduate course for people who have studied the history of art or who are artists themselves. Those people then bring a Western knowledge to art and they start to learn, whether they are an Indigenous person or a non-Indigenous person—they have an art background. A specific postgraduate course could be set up to bring in lecturers and programs from people all over the country.⁴³

4.30 He concluded with the comment that there may need to be 'a sort of standard before you go and work in an arts centre—you actually go out into the field before you get a job and work in them for a while'.⁴⁴ There was also support for on-the-job training. In this regard, it is worth noting that peak bodies such as Desart do provide some training and materials.⁴⁵ The issues include finding the time or money for staff to attend training; the extensiveness of training; and whether it sufficiently covers the range of necessary skills. The committee recognises the particular importance of training issues and this is addressed further in chapter seven.

Recommendation 2

4.31 The committee recommends that, to increase the skills base of art centre managers and prospective managers, DCITA, in conjunction with DEST, initiate discussions with selected tertiary institutions on the feasibility of introducing courses on art centre management and cross-cultural issues.

Staff retention

4.32 Staff turnover is a problem faced by services generally in rural and remote areas, but is a particular problem for art centres, especially in remote areas. The turnover of staff, and particularly the manager:

42 Mr Brian Tucker Accounting, *Submission 12*, p. 7.

43 Mr Tony Oliver, *Committee Hansard*, 19 February 2007, p. 46.

44 Mr Tony Oliver, *Committee Hansard*, 19 February 2007, p. 46.

45 See for example the training book they submitted to the committee: Desart, *Submission 49*, Attachment 2.

is one of the biggest problems facing Art Centres. Two to five years would be the norm, six months not uncommon, and over ten years, rare. In an industry (the arts) noted for its high burnout rate, the position of Art Centre Manager leads the field.⁴⁶

4.33 This was a view shared by Mr Tony Oliver who told the committee:

People burn out so quickly. Usually it is a three-year cycle. People come up with great spirit and idealism but by the time they actually learn everything they are exhausted and they are ready for the next lot to come in. Part of the secret is continuity—keeping that experience in the arts centre, giving longevity to that knowledge and actually having the funding there for that person that has that knowledge to be able to train other people. Continuity is important for any culture. The longer we know someone, the easier it is and trust develops.⁴⁷

4.34 The WA Department of Culture submitted that strategies:

to address staff retention issues amongst art centres and long-term strategies to ensure the employment of Indigenous art centre staff will contribute to the sustainability of art centres.⁴⁸

4.35 There is a widespread consensus amongst consultants and stakeholders that both people and materials in the sector are overstretched. The committee received few first-hand accounts from individual artists and art centre staff amongst its submissions, but those that arrived were clear:

I look after about 87 artists mostly women but I have also tried to include the many men on the community with the carving of traditional weapons and artifacts. We make occasional visits out into country hunting, to keep up the morale of the community. I make and prepare all the stretches used to paint on, from raw linen. I supply all the materials used in the production of fine art; I organize our exhibitions both at home and overseas, write the essays, produce the certificates of authenticity and the biographies, answer our many emails, keep our web site up to date. Often I feel more like a community social worker than an art coordinator...

I am tired and worn out and emotionally drained having to continually step up to the mark, now having built up the reputation of the artists and the considerable value of their paintings the tide of dealers and carpetbaggers waiting to profit for themselves is growing every day...

Sadly having reached my end I recognize the need to look after my own family, and myself, the personal cost has been far greater than I ever imagined, as have been the rewards.⁴⁹

46 Mr Brian Tucker Accounting, *Submission 12*, p. 7.

47 Mr Tony Oliver, *Committee Hansard*, 19 February 2007, p. 46.

48 WA Department of Culture and the Arts, *Submission 18*, pp 4–5.

49 Mr Narayan Kozeluh, Art coordinator for The Artists of Ampilatwatja, *Submission 20*.

4.36 The Desart survey showed many staff planned to leave or take a break, often citing workloads and the limitations of living in remote communities.⁵⁰ The pressures on staff can lead to issues with the capacity of art centres to operate effectively. This can lead to questions about the viability of operations. At the same time, people such as Ms Jennifer Herd, who has provided education in the sector for some years, have argued that 'remoteness should not be the measure by which rules and guidelines on financial support are made'.⁵¹

Infrastructure pressures

4.37 While art centres face many challenges, there is little doubt that physical infrastructure deficiencies appear to be the greatest. The committee received considerable evidence suggesting art centre infrastructure is over-stretched and getting rundown, as are the staff working in the centres.

4.38 The WA Department of Culture and the Arts submitted that within that state:

many communities currently serviced by art centres have considerable infrastructure needs, including, but not limited to, inadequate housing facilities for art centre staff and/or inadequate facilities within the art centre including limited storage facilities, limited office space, limited access to wet areas, IT systems, limited capacity to preserve and/or exhibit collections and inadequate temperature control systems. [And:]

- There is a growing demand for art centres or arts enterprise models and a number of communities with no access to these services at present. It is likely that the demand for more art centres in Western Australia will increase, with current demand exceeding current available funding.
- General infrastructure needs, particularly in remote communities, are further exacerbated by broader community infrastructure issues (e.g. closure of airline services, difficulties in accessing on-line services).
- Infrastructure requirements for artists who do not access art centres should also be considered with an emphasis on studio spaces where independent artists can make work. Artists in residence facilities in metropolitan and regional centres are also an important means for artists to develop good practice while engaging with communities.⁵²

4.39 There are numerous indicators making a case for an expanded funding stream for art centres. Departmental figures show extremely strong demand for the limited

50 Felicity Wright, *The Art and Craft Centre Story*, vol. 1 (Report), ATSIIC, Canberra, 1999, p. 211.

51 Ms Jennifer Herd, *Submission 47*, p. 2.

52 WA Department of Culture and the Arts, *Submission 18*, pp 4–5.

finds available, suggesting a lot more could be done if resources were available. In 2006–07 DCITA received over \$14 million worth of applications for less than \$5.5 million of funds, despite informing applicants of the limited ability to fund capital works.⁵³ This is consistent with the fact that the sector seems to have grown rapidly, yet the funding to support it has not.

4.40 The extent of infrastructure need is even clearer when DCITA's data on capital funding requests are examined. The department has received over \$21 million in applications for infrastructure assistance in the last three funding rounds. This excludes identified needs that did not result in formal funding bids. DCITA was only able to fund \$3 million of these funding bids. Furthermore, DCITA pointed out:

Applicants to the NACIS program are not likely to seek substantial funds for capital items as they are aware that NACIS funds are limited and requests for operational support (to cover art centre salaries, for example) often present the most pressing need.⁵⁴

4.41 Often arts centres located in remote communities are a significant employer of Aboriginal people who work as Arts Workers:

This is why Arts Centres in remote communities are crucial to the life and economy of communities. Arts Centres need the support of the government through efficient funding programs. Arts Centres also need to have proper infrastructures to service artists and this should be supported by the government to allow arts centres to grow and service in professional manners the artists it represents.⁵⁵

4.42 The Western Australian Department of Culture and the Arts noted that for a small level of government investment, art centres return enormous social, cultural and economic benefits. However:

the costs and challenges of running a remote area business are enormous. Available funding for art centres has remained almost static over the previous 12 years. The current DCITA funding program that offers core operational funding to the great majority of art centres (NACISS) has national funding of \$4 million, unchanged since the mid 1990s and despite a more-than-doubling of art centres operating.⁵⁶

4.43 Ms Belinda Scott, an arts centre staff member, expressed her concern at the levels of funding to artists and art centres, stating that:

There ought to be more money for projects and programmes to be delivered direct to Indigenous artists. Since ATSIC, and now DCITA have taken over the operational funding for Art Centres, the emphasis is on economic

53 DCITA, *Submission 50*, p. 7.

54 DCITA Answers to questions on notice, 10 April 2007 (received 24 May 2007).

55 Maningrida Arts & Culture, *Submission 51*, p. 2.

56 WA Department of Culture and the Arts, *Submission 18*, p. 3.

outcomes and other such performance indicators. The “money story” has become the driving imperative. Bula’bula Arts Aboriginal Corporation, by virtue of its constitution is a not-for-profit organisation, with any surplus monies (beyond that held in trust) to be returned to its members. That is, in being driven by the push to profit, the nature and services provided by BAAC are being dictated by government and no longer by the members, nor the Constitution.⁵⁷

4.44 Professor Jon Altman observed that 'the stagnation in operational funding has diverted attention from the capital funding needs of art centres for physical infrastructure, including art centre buildings and staff housing'.⁵⁸

Staff accommodation

4.45 There was a consistent message that housing for art centre staff is a problem in communities where housing generally is acutely overcrowded and scarce.⁵⁹ This is exacerbated by the fact, as one submitter pointed out, that art centre staff will themselves always put money into the art centre ahead of their own housing.⁶⁰

4.46 Another submitter was of the view that:

In the long run, a successful Art Centre with happy artists will only happen if there is competent Art Centre staff, and sooner or later, accommodation will be a factor, either because there is simply no accommodation for additional needed staff, or because the available accommodation has deteriorated to the point that it is uninhabitable.⁶¹

4.47 The committee heard many stories about the inadequacy of accommodation, and this is reflected in Desart's 2005 assessment of the infrastructure needs of the sector, in which housing features prominently (see also below).⁶² Accommodation is very scarce in many remote centres, and art centre staff may be reluctant to advocate for their housing needs, particularly when many Indigenous locals are living in overcrowded conditions. In these circumstances, it is possible that consideration would have to be given to factoring in housing as an essential part of any grants for infrastructure improvements for art centres. Otherwise there is a risk of having better art centre facilities, but no ability to attract or retain staff to keep them operating.

57 Ms Belinda Scott, *Submission 1*, pp 3–4.

58 Professor Jon Altman, 'Brokering Aboriginal Art: A Critical Perspective on Marketing, Institutions and the State', Kenneth Myer Lecture in Arts and Entertainment Management, 7 April 2005, Deakin University, Geelong, p. 14.

59 See for example Mr Brian Tucker, *Submission 12*.

60 Mr Brian Tucker, *Submission 12*, p. 5.

61 Brian Tucker Accounting, *Submission 12*, p. 5.

62 Desart, *Submission 49*, Attachment 1.

The challenge of infrastructure funding

4.48 The poor physical state of many art centres⁶³ and the lack of funds available for the repair and installation of art centre infrastructure⁶⁴ are factors which have the potential to undermine the continued success of the Indigenous visual art and crafts sector. Lack of infrastructure funding is not only undermining the arts centres themselves, but also putting arts centre staff under extra stress contributing to the sector's high staff turnover. In many cases, staff do not have adequate facilities⁶⁵ and in one case a staff member was asked to sleep outdoors.⁶⁶

4.49 Art centre infrastructure is expensive, mainly due to the remoteness of Indigenous communities. The cost of freight material to these communities is high, and access to qualified builders, materials and skilled tradespersons is not assured.⁶⁷

4.50 Both Desart and ANKAAA produced detailed analysis of the sector's infrastructure needs. Desart, in conjunction with a number of submissions, believe that there is an urgent need for capital works funding for operating facilities, staff housing and for vehicles.⁶⁸ In 2005, they estimated that Desart member art centres required approximately \$7 million for capital works, and that compared to other facilities such as schools, art centres are ignored.⁶⁹ The committee noted that even that figure may have been an underestimate, as it appeared to include low estimates for the cost of housing in particular.

4.51 ANKAAA identified that the majority of art centre building and facility needs were roofing, storage, housing for staff and general workspaces. These basic needs impact on the art centres' future growth.⁷⁰ This is particularly true in terms of attracting and retaining qualified and committed art centre staff. In some communities there is no housing available for art centre managers.⁷¹ Lack of reliable vehicles is also part of the infrastructure question, and many art centres lack transport – an essential factor is getting sold artwork to airports and other transport hubs.⁷²

63 Desart, *Submission 49*, p. 16.

64 Queensland Department of the Premier and Cabinet, *Submission 58*, p. 18; Belinda Scott, *Submission 1*, p. 3; Creative Economy, *Submission 8*, p. 4.

65 ANKAAA, *Submission 63*, p. 11.

66 Desart, *Submission 49*, p. 16.

67 ANKAAA, *Submission 63*, p. 12.

68 Desart, Central Australian Aboriginal Art Centres, Physical Infrastructure Needs Assessment (Facilities and Housing), November 2005, p. 4. (Attachment to Desart *Submission 49*.)

69 Desart, Central Australian Aboriginal Art Centres, Physical Infrastructure Needs Assessment (Facilities and Housing), November 2005, p. 4.

70 ANKAAA, *Submission 63*, p. 11.

71 ANKAAA, *Submission 63*, p. 11.

72 ANKAAA, *Submission 63*, p. 12.

4.52 In terms of funding sources there are Commonwealth funding initiatives, but Desart imply that they are disparate and lack coordination:

Since the demise of ATSSIS, there is no dedicated Federal funding stream available to Art Centres for the purpose of maintenance, refurbishment, extensions or construction of new facilities or housing. In the past some funds have been made available through the NACIS and RACS programs, usually when there was an available surplus after operating funds had been distributed.⁷³

4.53 While the NACIS program provided almost \$5.5 million during 2006-2007 for sixty-six proposals, most of the funding was for the operational costs of art centres, often through supporting salaries for art centre coordinators – the program itself is not specifically designed for infrastructure funding.⁷⁴

4.54 There are, however, other funding programs. Commencing in 2004-05 a DCITA initiative provided 'special initiative' funding of \$4 million over four years, and seven projects to fund art centre facilities have been funded through this initiative.⁷⁵ Further funds were made available in 2005-06, and the latest round of applications was decided in January 2007. Final funding for the initiative is due to expire in 2007-2008.⁷⁶

4.55 The Department of Transport and Regional Services (DoTARS) administers the Regional Partnerships program. The Regional Partnerships program can provide funding for specific individual projects that meet one or more of the following objectives:

- stimulate growth in regions by providing more opportunities for economic and social participation;
- improve access to services in a cost effective and sustainable way, particularly for those communities in regional Australia with a population of less than 5000;
- support planning that assists communities to identify and explore opportunities and to develop strategies that result in direct action; and
- help communities make structural adjustments in regions affected by major economic, social or environmental change.⁷⁷

73 Desart, Central Australian Aboriginal Art Centres, Physical Infrastructure Needs Assessment (Facilities and Housing), November 2005, p. 7 (Attachment to Desart *Submission 49*).

74 DCITA, *Submission 50*, p. 6.

75 Desart, Central Australian Aboriginal Art Centres, Physical Infrastructure Needs Assessment (Facilities and Housing), November 2005, p. 7 (Attachment to Desart *Submission 49*).

76 DCITA, *Submission 50*, p. 9.

77 DoTARS correspondence to the Committee, 20 April 2007.

4.56 Since the Regional Partnerships program commenced in July 2003, there have been 14 projects, at a cost of \$2.92 million (GST inclusive), approved for funding for Indigenous art centre infrastructure. The program as a whole has a budget of approximately \$68 million for financial year 2007-2008.⁷⁸

4.57 Desart compiled a list of infrastructure funding sources from the States' and Territories' funding sources. They argued that, while it varies, there are currently few funding sources available to art centres to fund capital works projects:

Partnership funding

Of those funding sources that may be available to Art Centres the majority are 'partnership' funding arrangements that require at least two and in major projects up to ten or more different partners to participate. One recent example: In order to raise funds for a new Art Centre building Mowanjum Artists Spirit of Wandjina Aboriginal Corporation needed contributions from ten different funding sources, a major logistic, documentation and lobbying exercise.

Western Australia

In WA, more capital works funds are available through various sources including a number of Indigenous programs and WA Lotteries. Desart member Art Centres are strongly supported by two advocates in their fund-raising efforts. This includes support from the Ngaanyatjarra Regional Arts and the WA Department of Industry and Resources, Office of Aboriginal Economic Development. Staff in these two organisations assist to identify funding sources and often involve themselves in the community consultations required, filling out applications and lobbying very effectively on behalf of Art Centres.

South Australia

In SA this assistance and lobbying role is also undertaken by KU Arts which has been successful in supporting Art Centres to obtain funds for capital works projects both for new facilities (Minymaku house) and small project (Mimli Maku Art Centre upgrade).

Northern Territory

In the Northern Territory there appears to be NO access to Territory capital works funds, thus making it very difficult to access any 'partnership' funding. To date Arts NT has not provided any assistance or support for Art Centres seeking capital works funding; and has stated categorically that it will not make capital works funds available. While the lack of provision of funds is understandable in the context of the small revenue base, the lack of advice and service support is disappointing.⁷⁹

78 DoTARS correspondence to the Committee, 20 April 2007.

79 Desart, Central Australian Aboriginal Art Centres, Physical Infrastructure Needs Assessment (Facilities and Housing), November 2005, p. 6. . (Attachment to Desart *Submission 49*.)

Infrastructure funding in the Northern Territory: a job for the Aboriginal Benefits Account?

4.58 Desart's report on infrastructure needs emphasises the difficulty in locating sources of infrastructure money, particularly in the Northern Territory. One possible source could be the Aboriginal Benefits Account (ABA) – a source of funding that Desart recommended in its submission.⁸⁰ In response to a press release by Minister Vanstone on 22 September 2004, Desart commented:

Desart has been advised that there are bilateral discussions about the possibility of some \$6 million being made available from the Aboriginal Benefit Account, and that this \$6 million might be put towards capital works funding for Art Centres, providing the Trustees of the Fund approve the use of the funds in this way. However Desart is not well-informed about this matter and sources close to the Trustees have advised that to date there is no such approval. [Senator] Vanstone's press release makes no mention of the specific purpose for any such funds.

Should \$6 million in capital works funding be distributed to Art Centres right across the Northern Territory, to both ANKAAA and Desart members, this amount would most likely meet the identified need in the NT for \$2.2 million. This would be an excellent outcome for Central Australian Art Centres within the NT.⁸¹

4.59 The ABA is a Special Account of the Australian Government established for the receipt of statutory royalty equivalent monies generated from mining on Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory, and the distribution of these monies. The ABA is administered by the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC) which coordinates a whole-of-government approach to programs and services for Indigenous Australians. Part of the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, OIPC has had a central role in the Australian Government's arrangements in Indigenous affairs since 1 July 2004.⁸²

4.60 The ABA is administered by the OIPC in accordance with the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (the ALRA), and is a Special Account for the purposes of the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*. Under subsection 64(4) of the ALRA, the ABA is able to make beneficial payments to Aboriginal people in the NT only, as directed by the Minister for Families,

80 Desart, *Submission 49*, Recommendation 3, “Both the Commonwealth Government and the NT Government should strongly pursue the release of Aboriginal Benefit Account funds and make any such funds available for capital works in NT Art Centres”, p. 17.

81 Desart, Central Australian Aboriginal Art Centres, Physical Infrastructure Needs Assessment (Facilities and Housing), November 2005, p. 7. (Attachment to Desart *Submission 49*.)

82 Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination Website, <http://oipc.gov.au/>, accessed 4 April 2007.

Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.⁸³ Those seeking funding from the ABA under sub-section 64(4) are required to fill out an Expression of Interest form available from the OIPC website.⁸⁴ The Australian Government aims to target expenditure so that it contributes to creating more social and economic benefits for Indigenous Territorians. Priority funding areas are:

- scholarship and leadership;
- community enhancement;
- small business;
- major economic initiatives;
- land and sea management; and
- ceremonial and funeral.

4.61 The committee recognises that, even should the ABA become a source of support to art centres for development, it will always have its limitations. It will always face competing demands from many different types of funding requests; it will only be a viable source for as long as mining royalties are forthcoming; and, crucially, it is only relevant to the Northern Territory.

4.62 Nevertheless, providing infrastructure funding from the ABA has its attractions. First, art centre infrastructure fits several of the listed criteria for use of ABA funds. Second, infrastructure construction, and the positive contribution it makes to Indigenous art, contributes to Indigenous financial independence. Finally, it is particularly appropriate as arts infrastructure funding is particularly scarce in the Northern Territory (compared, for example, to Western Australia). The committee notes that the Commonwealth has already indicated its support for the release of funds from the ABA for this purpose.⁸⁵

83 Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination Website, <http://oipc.gov.au/programs/AboriginalsBenefitAccountNT.asp>, accessed 4 April 2007. In relation to sub-section 64(4) payments, the Minister is advised by the fifteen person ABA Advisory Committee. Its Chairperson, currently Ms Miriam Rose Baumann AM, is appointed by the Minister. Ms Baumann is also a member of the National Indigenous Council. The fourteen other members are elected by the four NT land councils established under the ALRA; the Northern Land Council; Central Land Council; Tiwi Land Council; and the Anindilyakwa Land Council.

84 Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination Website, <http://oipc.gov.au/programs/documents/ABAform.pdf>, accessed 4 April 2007.

85 Senator Amanda Vanstone, 'Coalition increases support for Indigenous art', Media Release VPS 571.04, 22 September 2004. See also Schedule 2.2 to the Overarching Agreement on Indigenous Affairs Between the Commonwealth of Australia and the Northern Territory of Australia 2005–2010, <http://www.nt.gov.au/dcm/people/pdf/20050406/arts.pdf>, accessed May 2007.

Recommendation 3

4.63 The committee recommends that DCITA, in co-operation with the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, ensure that art centres in the Northern Territory are aware of opportunities to apply for funding from the Aboriginal Benefits Account, and that ANKAAA and Desart assist art centres to apply for funding from this source. The committee encourages the ABA Advisory Committee to support applications from art centres, noting the competing demands on the ABA from different types of funding requests.

Conclusion

4.64 The Commonwealth's Indigenous Art Centres Strategy and Action Plan, released in 2003 and developed in cooperation with the Australia Council and the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), sets funding for art centre infrastructure as an action to be implemented as part of its 'community capacity and maintenance of culture' key result area.⁸⁶

4.65 Nonetheless, there appears to be no coordinated approach to funding art centre infrastructure. What resources are available are brought together from existing but disparate programs, rather than a specific dedicated fund. Given the importance of the issue as identified by the terms of reference for the inquiry, the committee considers a more direct approach to funding art centre infrastructure would now be timely.

Recommendation 4

4.66 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth establish a new infrastructure fund to assist Indigenous visual arts and craft; that this fund complement existing NACIS program funding; that this infrastructure fund be for a sum of the order of \$25 million, made available over a period of five years; and that the fund be administered by DCITA.

4.67 The committee noted that the amount of funding available through government Indigenous art programs has not kept pace the expansion of the industry, or with the proliferation of artistic initiatives in Indigenous communities.

4.68 This is not inherently a problem: economic success can mean independence from any need for government support. The committee heard first-hand from two major Indigenous-owned and controlled private initiatives, Papunya Tula Artists and Jirrawun Arts Corporation. Both of these organisations currently require no government support, while delivering significant benefits to their communities. The committee acknowledges and applauds the success of Indigenous art ventures such as these, and an understanding of their histories can help identify potential pathways for success of Indigenous art businesses.

86 'Pursue funding for capital works such as the construction of new buildings and upgrade of existing facilities'; DCITA, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services and the Australia Council, *Indigenous Art Centres Strategy and Action Plan*, section 5.

4.69 Papunya is a settlement 240 kilometres north-west of Alice Springs. The Papunya Tula Art Movement began in 1971:

when a school teacher, Geoffrey Bardon, encouraged some of the men to paint a blank school wall. The murals sparked off tremendous interest in the community and soon many men started painting. In 1972 the artists successfully established their own company.⁸⁷

4.70 The movement – and the organisation – were born of a combination of the drive and artistic talent of the people of Papunya, and the assistance of teachers and other advisors, who helped them to create an organisation that would get their art to markets, and ensure that income was returned to the artists. The ensuing years saw the organisation receive a range of government assistance while its staff worked hard to develop the careers and reputations of the artists. Art advisors who assisted Papunya Tula were frequently either government employees or funded by the public sector.⁸⁸ There was support from the Australia Council, the Commonwealth's Office of Aboriginal Affairs and the Aboriginal Arts Board.⁸⁹ The Arts Board at one stage employed seventeen advisors working with Indigenous artists supporting the creation and marketing of art works, some of whom would have worked with Papunya Tula.⁹⁰ Anthropologist Fred Myers indicates that during the mid 1970s 'Arts Board grants were the lifeblood of the co-operative. Not only did such grants fund [the art advisor's] position, but the Arts Board and Aboriginal Arts and Crafts were the principal buyers of the paintings'.⁹¹

4.71 Papunya Tula had benefited from relatively early recognition and support from key players in the art sector. It has also had stable and skilled staff, such as Paul Sweeney, who has worked for Papunya Tula for ten years – much longer than typical for an art centre coordinator.⁹² The committee is aware that there is a range of views about how art centres should do business, but it appears clear that one of the secrets to Papunya Tula's commercial success has been its aggressive and disciplined approach to the market, as well as its careful nurturing of long-term relationships with artists.

4.72 A group of artists of the east Kimberley are the owners of the successful enterprise Jirrawun Arts Corporation. The business includes painters who are now some of Australia's best known artists, such as Paddy Bedford and Freddy Timms. The idea for Jirrawun arose from a meeting in Melbourne between non-Indigenous

87 Papunya Tula Artists web site, *History*, <http://www.papunyatula.com.au/history/>, accessed May 2007.

88 Fred Myers, *Painting Culture*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2002, pp 132–3, 142–3, 150.

89 Fred Myers, *Painting Culture*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2002, p. 132.

90 Nicolas Peterson, 'Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Pty Ltd: A Brief History', in P Loveday and P Cooke (eds), *Aboriginal Arts and Crafts and the Market*, Australian National University North Australia Research Unit, Darwin, 1983, p. 64.

91 Fred Myers, *Painting Culture*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2002, p. 155.

92 Mr Paul Sweeney, Papunya Tula Artists, *Committee Hansard*, 21 February 2007, p. 5.

gallerist Tony Oliver and artist Freddy Timms, in which they realised a way needed to be found to ensure artists had appropriate control over their work and their economic future.⁹³ Jirrawun was registered as an Aboriginal Corporation.⁹⁴ It has benefited from non-Indigenous expertise on its board, and from cultivating corporate backing as it has developed, including from a legal firm, accountants, and the Argyle Diamond Mine's owners.⁹⁵ It continues to have a board that combines Indigenous artists and non-Indigenous specialists and backers, while remaining Indigenous owned and controlled. Its structure has evolved along with the artists' profiles and needs, with its structure changing in 2004, and with a Cultural Fund as part of the operations attracting tax deductible status.⁹⁶

4.73 While Jirrawun has succeeded with corporate support, the art of this region also evolved out of earlier art centre programs and the perspicacious recognition and promotion of the art by gallerist and dealer Mary Macha.⁹⁷ There are many artists in the region, some working through Jirrawun, others through art centres and local dealers. Much of this movement was fostered by the public and corporate funding support for Waringarri Artists, an art centre that for many years supported the artists of Warmun/Turkey Creek, including artists who went on to form the Jirrawun group. The funding of Waringarri allowed its staff to travel to communities encouraging the development of art, distributing materials, and collecting works for sale. As with Papunya, the Warmun artists benefited from long-term and committee art centre workers including Kevin Kelly, who worked with Waringarri for five years in the 1990s and has a continuing relationship with artists and the sector in the local area, spanning some 15 years.

4.74 Both Jirrawun and Papunya Tula are grounded in tremendous artistic talent, but also in the skills of those assisting them as businesses. As gallerist Freddie Mora noted, 'you need great artists and management'.⁹⁸ The committee recognises it was a long road for each organisation to economic independence. For Papunya Tula, it was over twenty years,⁹⁹ while for Jirrawun it was a decade.¹⁰⁰ In both cases it took many

93 Jeremy Eccles, 'Jirrawun: A Unique Model for Aboriginal Art', *Art & Australia*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2006, p. 89.

94 Marcia Langton, 'Goovoomji's World', in Linda Michael (ed.), *Paddy Bedford*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2006, p. 57.

95 Marcia Langton, 'Goovoomji's World', in Linda Michael (ed.), *Paddy Bedford*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2006, p. 58.

96 Marcia Langton, 'Goovoomji's World', in Linda Michael (ed.), *Paddy Bedford*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2006, p. 59.

97 Kim Ackerman, 'Rover Thomas', *Artlink*, vol. 20, no. 1; Rover Thoms Joolama, Artist biography, National Gallery of Victoria, http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/rover_queenie/rover.html, accessed May 2007.

98 Quoted in Jeremy Eccles, 'Jirrawun: A Unique Model for Aboriginal Art', *Art & Australia*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2006, p. 83.

99 Mr Paul Sweeney, Papunya Tula Artists, *Committee Hansard*, 21 February 2007, p. 5.

years of development before they were able to reach the secure and profitable positions they now enjoy. Both organisations benefited from significant long-term support from government and corporate programs.

4.75 The evidence before the committee has indicated that programs such as NACIS (explained in chapter 6) have played a significant part in fostering a movement that has provided both cultural and economic benefits to many Indigenous communities. As Professor Altman's research (cited in the previous chapter) has shown, positive economic returns come from investment in this sector. The committee therefore believes there is good evidence to support growth in funding initiatives that will foster the development and maturation of the Indigenous art and craft sector.

4.76 The committee supports programs with the specific aim of identifying art centres that are appropriately situated to be able to make the transition towards greater financial independence. It considers that resources to help them develop the knowledge, capacity, management and infrastructure to enhance their success and make the transition to greater economic independence should be encouraged. DEWR and Indigenous Business Australia operate a number of programs which are outlined in chapter 7.

Recommendation 5

4.77 The committee supports the roles of DEWR and Indigenous Business Australia programs in assisting where appropriate the transition to economic independence for art centres, and recommends that these initiatives be further promoted by DEWR and IBA and utilised by art centres.

Recommendation 6

4.78 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth further expand funding under the existing NACIS scheme and consider revising its guidelines to confine its use to non-infrastructure projects.

Recommendation 7

4.79 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth consult with stakeholders in the industry, particularly Desart and ANKAAA, on reforms to NACIS funding criteria, so that funding decisions are guided in part by the aim of ensuring operation of art centres in accordance with best practice principles.¹⁰¹ These standards may include (but not be confined to):

- **staffing requirements that meet the operational needs of art centres, and ensure flexibility to accommodate any particular requirements of such centres;**
- **governance and reporting systems; and**

100 Arnold Bloch Leibler & Jirrawun Arts Corporation, *Submission 59*, p. 3.

101 On this subject, see in particular Desart, *Submission 49*, pp 24–25.

-
- **training commitments, including financial, management and art education components.**

4.80 The committee also makes other observations relating to government support for art centres in later chapters.

Alice Springs: A special case?

4.81 As part of this inquiry, the committee held a hearing in Alice Springs, and received many submissions from stakeholders in and around that town. Committee members visited several art centres in the area. It became clear that Alice Springs is widely regarded as an area in which some of the most significant issues exist regarding fair treatment of Indigenous artists. It is there that many of the 'carpetbagging' operations are reputed to operate or visit. There is ongoing discussion in the sector about how to tackle this. Some of these issues relating to the integrity of the market are examined further in chapters eight to ten.

4.82 One topic the committee understands has received some discussion has been the possibility of the establishment of an art centre in Alice Springs particularly aimed at catering to Indigenous artists visiting from other places. This could complement the art centres that exist in many of those places and the art centres in Alice Springs that cater for the locals. It could also assist artists who are from parts of the central desert region that have no art centre at all.

4.83 Any such centre could be of enormous benefit in the biggest local Indigenous art market in the country. However it would have significant resource implications, and involve careful negotiation and planning to ensure it did not drain resources from, or cause conflict with, other art centres in the region. For example, the committee was impressed with the early development of Tangentyere Artists, working with artists in the town camps. It would not support an initiative that might have the effect of undermining already existing arrangements such as this. Nor would the committee want to see artists or resources drawn away from art centres in the more remote towns and settlements.

Recommendation 8

4.84 The committee recommends that, in light of the special circumstances facing Indigenous artists in the Alice Springs area, a proposal be developed, including a funding bid, for an art centre in Alice Springs that will cater for artists visiting the town from surrounding settlements.

