



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

**Submission by the Department of Foreign Affairs  
and Trade to the**

**Senate Environment, Communications,  
Information Technology and the Arts Committee**

**Inquiry into Australia's Indigenous visual arts  
and craft sector**

## Executive Summary

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), as the Australian Government agency with prime responsibility for promoting a positive and accurate image of Australia and its culture internationally, plays a key role in increasing international awareness and understanding of Australia's Indigenous cultures, including their visual arts and craft. An understanding of Australian culture and values by other societies is essential if Australia's national interests in a range of areas, including security, trade and foreign policy, are to be advanced. In this context, the excellent quality of Indigenous visual arts and craft, and the high regard with which it is held internationally, is a valuable asset in our cultural diplomacy efforts. DFAT therefore differs from those agencies which have a specific brief to market Indigenous cultural product to the world, to develop international markets for the output of our Indigenous communities and thereby to contribute to the sustainability of the Indigenous visual arts and craft sector.

Nevertheless, while there might be difference in aim and purpose, there is clearly a DFAT contribution to this outcome. When combined with the efforts of other agencies, those DFAT cultural activities aimed at promoting awareness of Australia's Indigenous cultures, including an international touring program for Indigenous visual arts, stimulate increased interest in Indigenous visual arts product. In what follows, DFAT's comments address the final terms of reference of this inquiry -- *(g) future opportunities for further growth of Australia's Indigenous visual arts and craft sector, including through further developing international markets.*

DFAT has used various tools to promote Indigenous visual arts and craft:

- Over the past 25 years, DFAT has leased Indigenous artworks from the Australian Government's fine arts rental program, the Artbank Collection, and exhibited them in more than 80 diplomatic missions around the world. In this manner, it has presented the work of Indigenous artists to the elite of many societies.
- The Department's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program has, for a number of years, funded the international touring of a range of contemporary and traditional Indigenous artwork.
- Since its inception in 1998, the Australia International Cultural Council, a DFAT initiative chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, has included Indigenous visual arts in the programs of Australian cultural presentations in focus countries.
- A departmental program funding the touring overseas of Australian exhibitions and performers, the Cultural Relations Discretionary Grant Program, has funded annually the international promotion of Indigenous culture, including that of visual arts and craft.
- The International Cultural Visits Program, which invites prominent decision-makers in the arts sectors of many countries to visit Australia and acquaint themselves with our arts and culture, has regularly included surveys of Indigenous visual arts in the itineraries of visitors.

DFAT's efforts over the years in taking Indigenous art and craft to the world, along with the activities of other agencies and private interests, have contributed to the

consolidation of international markets for Indigenous visual arts and craft. The continuation of these programs will also assist with the future development of those markets and the sustainability of the Indigenous visual arts and craft sector.

## **Introduction**

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is pleased to contribute to the Inquiry of the Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Committee into Australia's Indigenous visual arts and craft sector. The department believes that its role in enabling the international exposure of Indigenous visual arts and craft is integral to the larger effort of putting mechanisms in place which will ensure the growth and sustainability of the sector.

In this regard, the information and comments in this paper are especially relevant to the final of the seven terms of reference for the Inquiry:

*(g) future opportunities for further growth of Australia's Indigenous visual arts and craft sector, including through further developing international markets.*

## **2. DFAT and the promotion of Indigenous visual arts internationally**

It should be pointed out that DFAT's role in this context is not, first and foremost, to develop markets overseas for Indigenous visual arts and craft. This is the brief of other agencies, such as the Australia Council for the Arts and Austrade. But DFAT activities in this area *do* facilitate the further development of international markets for Indigenous visual arts and craft.

DFAT is primarily interested in the product of the Indigenous visual arts and craft sector as a cultural diplomacy tool. In this regard, the work of Australia's Indigenous artists and craftspeople is of high value and makes an important contribution to the promotion of Australia's wider foreign and trade policy interests. The incorporation of Indigenous visual arts and craft into the cultural programs of the department contributes significantly to the achievement of the department's Outcome No. 3:

*Public understanding in Australia and overseas of Australia's foreign and trade policy and a positive image of Australia internationally.*

Departmental activities, which include exhibiting Indigenous visual arts and crafts overseas, contribute effectively to the promotion of a positive image of Australia. Supporting the international exposure of high quality Australian visual arts and craft conveys to an international audience the high regard with which Australians hold Indigenous visual arts product – and the cultures which produce it – and reflects well on Australia generally.

Showcasing Indigenous visual arts and craft on the international stage reinforces impressions of Australians as a tolerant people, and as a multicultural society which values cultural diversity. Moreover, cultural activities encompassing the exhibiting of Indigenous visual art and design are often used as platforms to advocate to influential audiences Australian views on sometimes quite sensitive issues, ranging from human rights and the return of Indigenous remains to cultural heritage and conservation.

Exhibiting Indigenous art and craft internationally is also clearly connected to the department's role in advancing Australia's trade interests. DFAT's cultural programs in effect market the output of Australia's Indigenous artists and craftspeople and prompt further sales by promoting the further development of international markets. Departmental programs that include information dissemination, and support for touring performing Indigenous arts, enhance the knowledge of foreign audiences. The prominent role of DFAT in touring Indigenous art internationally has also increased interest in Australia, in many markets, as a tourist destination.

The following is a brief description of the programs that have underpinned DFAT's efforts in taking Indigenous art to the world. DFAT remains alert to the opportunities to contribute more effectively by additional activities or fine-tuning existing programs.

### **3. Promoting Indigenous visual arts and craft through DFAT programs**

The Department's programs have promoted a greater understanding and awareness of Indigenous visual arts internationally in many ways. A comprehensive list of these is at **Attachment A**.

#### ***3.1 International exposure for the Artbank Collection of Indigenous art***

Artbank is a fully self-funding art rental program of the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts which was established in 1980 to reinvest its revenues back into Australian art and culture. Today, the ever expanding Artbank Collection comprises over 9000 significant works of all sizes. With works by more than 3000 artists from around the country, it is Australia's largest and most prominent collection for rental. The work of Indigenous artists represents a significant proportion of the collection.

DFAT has been renting works from the Artbank Collection to exhibit Australian artwork in overseas diplomatic missions since Artbank's inception. Currently, there are 1250 artworks being exhibited at 80 posts. Twenty-two percent, or 275 works, are by Indigenous artists.

Through this rental program, Indigenous visual arts and craft is being exhibited overseas in prestigious locations, where it is likely to be seen and appreciated by the elite of different countries, including senior Ministers and bureaucrats in foreign governments, influential media figures, business leaders, and arts industry decision-makers. With pride of place in the public areas of many embassies, but also in the offices and residences of many Heads of Mission and other senior diplomats, Indigenous visual arts and craft is being proudly presented as representative of the diversity of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

In addition to renting works from Artbank, DFAT has also leased exhibitions of Indigenous work, curated from the Artbank Collection, which it tours internationally. More detail on this aspect of the Department's activities is available below.

### ***3.2 The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program***

For the past three years, the department's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) program has funded the international touring of three contemporary Indigenous art exhibitions. DFAT support has also provided in-kind assistance via its extensive network of diplomatic missions. Embassies around the world have facilitated the export and entry of the exhibitions, arranged venues, organised marketing and publicity, translated accompanying information materials and arranged other advocacy and promotional events which have leveraged off the interest in this aspect of Australian culture.

Exhibitions have included :

- *Seasons of Kunwinjku*, a series of contemporary paintings from West Arnhem Land;
- *Kiripuranji: Contemporary Art from the Tiwi Islands*, leased from the Artbank Collection, this exhibition features contemporary work from Bathurst and Melville Islands in the Northern Territory (a report on Kiripuranji's role in the cultural diplomacy context is at **Attachment B**); and
- *Kickin' Up Dust*, a series of 40 striking photographs from four Indigenous festivals.

Further details of these exhibitions are at **Attachment A**.

### ***3.3 Australia International Cultural Council***

The Australia International Cultural Council (AICC) was founded in 1998 to step up Australia's cultural diplomacy. Mr Downer chairs the Council, which is composed of senior arts experts from industry and government. Senator Kemp is a member. Since its inception, the AICC has run in-country focus programs in Japan, Germany, the United States, China, South-East Asia, the United Kingdom and India. These programs have included exhibitions of Indigenous visual arts and craft, including:

- *The Native Born*: an exhibition of objects and representations from Ramingining, Arnhem Land, which toured to New York, Berlin and Taipei in 2002; and
- *Spirit Country, Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Art*, an exhibition of contemporary works from northern and central Australia, which toured to Shanghai and Tokyo in 2003.

In 2005 and 2006, the AICC and the Australia Council combined forces to present a major presentation of Australian contemporary culture in the United Kingdom called *Undergrowth: Australian Arts UK 2005 and 2006*. In 2006, Indigenous visual arts exhibitions in the program included:

- Fiona Foley's exhibition, *Strange Fruit*, at the October Gallery, London;
- An exhibition of the works of the Lockhart River Art Gang, *Unchartered Territory*, at the October Gallery. The Lockhart River Art Gang are a unique collective of young Australian Aboriginal artists who create vibrant contemporary works inspired by the beauty of the East Cape;

- *Memory as Landscape*, works from artists working at Utopia, also at the October Gallery; and
- *Dreaming the Dreaming*, an exhibition of the Kurrir Kurrir dance boards of the East Kimberly, shown at the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum, Salisbury, as part of the Salisbury International Arts Festival. The painted boards feature the work of some of Australia's most significant Indigenous artists, Rover Thomas and Paddy Tjamtiji.

### ***3.4 The Australian Visual Arts Touring Program to South and South-East Asia***

The Department's Australian Visual Arts Touring Program supports the Asialink Arts Exhibitions Program which, for many years, has deployed Australian art exhibitions to countries in South and South-East Asia. In addition to departmental financial support, diplomatic missions throughout the region have regularly assisted with the staging of the exhibitions, including by arranging publicity and other support services.

Recent exhibitions which have featured Indigenous artists have included: *Photographica Australis*; *Unwrapped: Australian Textile and Fashion Designers*; *Sacred ground beating heart : the art of Judy Watson 1989-2003*; *I thought I knew but I was wrong: New Video Art From Australia*, and *Supernatural Artificial*, an exhibition of contemporary Australian photography, which included the work of Indigenous artist Darren Siwes.

### ***3.5 The Cultural Relations Discretionary Grant Program***

This DFAT cultural program provides seed-funding which enables Australian artists and performers to tour overseas. A good proportion of grants approved in recent years have supported overseas exposure for Indigenous visual arts. A full list is at **Attachment A**.

Perhaps the most prominent among the Indigenous art exhibitions which have attracted departmental support in recent years has been the commissioning of work by eight Indigenous artists which was included in the architectural fabric of one of the four buildings of the Musée du quai Branly in Paris. The new museum, situated on the banks of the River Seine, was initiated by President Jacques Chirac, who personally approached the Australian Government requesting the inclusion of Indigenous Australian art. The Australian Government contributed substantial funding and in-kind support to ensure this request was met. Funding was provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (through grants from the department's Cultural Relations Discretionary Grant program ), the Australia-France Foundation, the then Department of Immigration, Multiculturalism and Indigenous Affairs and the Australia Council for the Arts. There was also a significant commitment of time and expertise by staff of the Australian Embassy in Paris.

To coincide with the opening of the new museum, the Embassy also displayed an exhibition of 70 Indigenous art works from the collection of the Melbourne-based Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi. The exhibition will be on show until January 2007.

### ***3.6 DFAT programs promoting Indigenous culture through film***

With funding from the Australia International Cultural Council, and in conjunction with the Australian Film Commission, DFAT manages the Embassy Film Roadshow. Drawing on a stock of more than 50 feature films, and a similar number of shorts, the Roadshow has facilitated the staging of mini film festivals in many countries. DFAT-managed diplomatic missions play a critical role in staging the festivals, engaging venues, managing contracts, arranging publicity, etc. Programs at these events have often included films and shorts on Indigenous content and films by Indigenous filmmakers. Details of these films are at **Attachment A**. The AICC has also supported a series of overseas film festivals, all of which have included Indigenous film/s. The Berlin 2001 festival was Indigenous film only.

### ***3.7 International Cultural Visits Program***

Under the auspices of the International Cultural Visits Program (ICV), DFAT annually sponsors visits to Australia by prominent leaders in the arts and cultural industries of a range of countries. The program promotes greater awareness of the sophistication of Australian culture among discerning decision-makers abroad and assists its future programming overseas.

To ensure international visitors under the ICV program have an accurate perception of Indigenous artists and their unique culture, programs include meetings with both urban and traditional artists and visits to Indigenous communities in rural and remote locations. Further details of some of the excellent outcomes for Indigenous visual arts international exposure are at **Attachment A**.

One of the most significant exhibitions of Australian Indigenous art to be held in the United States was assisted in its development by a visit to Australia in 2004, under the auspices of the ICV program, by the associate curator of modern and contemporary art at the National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) in Washington, Ms Britta Konau.

The exhibition, *Dreaming their Way: Australian Aboriginal Women Painters*, opened at the NMWA on 28 June 2006. With the objective of undertaking research for the exhibition, Ms Konau visited Alice Springs, art centres on the Tiwi Islands and Ntaria (Hermannsburg), as well as Australia's major cities. The exhibition, featuring the work of 33 Indigenous artists from across Australia, was the first-ever of its kind in the United States and presented 80 works ranging from intricate bark paintings to intensely colourful canvasses. Following its display at the NMWA, the exhibition was scheduled to be shown at the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, from 7 October until 10 December.

## **4. Works in progress – DFAT projects promoting Indigenous visual arts in the future**

The department will continue to support the international exposure of Indigenous visual arts and craft through the programs mentioned above. It is involved in a number of projects which will continue to realise its long-standing commitment to promote greater awareness and understanding of Australia's Indigenous cultures, often through the support of international touring of exhibitions. DFAT's cultural

programs will continue to be a vital pathway to international audiences for Indigenous art, and help to maintain the sustainability of our Indigenous communities.

#### **4.1 *Gelam Nguzu Kazi – Dugong My son***

A new exhibition, *Gelam Nguzu Kazi – Dugong My Son*, featuring prints from the Torres Strait Islands, (island of Mua) will begin to tour from the end of 2006 until mid-2009. The exhibition will tour to the South Pacific, South-East Asia and North Asia. It is being leased from the Artbank Collection. (Details of the new exhibition are at **Attachment C.**)

#### **4.2 *Singapore Art Museum***

The Singapore Art Museum is planning to work with a major Australian gallery to put together an exhibition of Indigenous Australian prints which is expected to show at the museum in 2008 and perhaps tour throughout the South-East Asian region. The museum is liaising with the Australian High Commission, Singapore, on the project.

#### **4.3 *Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels***

The Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels is researching a proposal for an Australian cultural festival to be held there in spring or autumn 2009. A central feature of the festival would be an exhibition of Indigenous art objects or an exhibition which centred on contemporary Indigenous art. The Artistic Coordinator of the Centre for Fine Arts, Mr Pablo Fernandez, recently visited Australia – under the auspices of the department's International Cultural Visits program – to explore the feasibility of the proposal.

#### **4.4 *Film at AusArts India, Chennai and Mumbai, December 2006 – January 2007***

*AusArts India* – a two-year Australia International Cultural Council-funded cultural promotion – moves into stage two at the end of 2006 with Australian participation in four international film festivals – Kolkata (10-17 November), Goa (23 November – 3 December), Chennai (17-25 December) and Mumbai (14-28 January 2007). Goa and Chennai will both feature retrospectives of the work of director Rolf de Heer, including the award-winning Indigenous-themed *Ten Canoes* and *The Tracker*.

### **5. Advice on Indigenous protocols and ethical issues**

Integral to the larger question of implementing programs which truly sustain the Indigenous visual arts and craft sector is the question of the ethical treatment of the artists and their art. A sensitive approach to these questions is not only required in the domestic environment but also in the way Indigenous artists and their art are introduced to the world.

In its role as a presenter of Indigenous visual arts internationally, the department is cognizant of the need to sensitize its officers to the need to ensure that correct protocols are observed. Detailed advice on these matters is provided in the Department's Public Diplomacy Handbook, which is made available to all posts. (The relevant extract is reproduced at **Appendix D.**)



Previously, posts have been approached by people from non-Indigenous backgrounds who copy Australian Indigenous styles of art and who seek the assistance of the diplomatic mission. With this kind of experience in mind, officers are advised that the Australian Government should endorse and support only authentic Indigenous producers, unless it is clear that there is a genuine cooperative venture between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people.

DFAT officers are cautioned that there are copyright and moral rights to consider and that the Government should not be associated with products and artists whose credentials are uncertain or whose Indigenous identity cannot be verified.

Posts are referred to other publications which explain the protocols to be observed, but are also asked to consult the Department's Executive Officer in charge of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program who is always an Indigenous officer.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program**

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has, for many years, supported the international touring of a number of exhibitions of Indigenous visual arts. DFAT support has been in the form of financing and in-kind assistance via its extensive network of diplomatic missions. Embassies around the world have facilitated the export and entry of the exhibitions, arranged venues, organised marketing and publicity, and translated accompanying information materials. These exhibitions have included:

*Seasons of Kunwinjku*, a series of contemporary paintings which exemplify West Arnhem Land's rich artistic traditions. This exhibition is owned by the department.

*Kiripuranji: Contemporary Art from the Tiwi Islands*. This exhibition, leased from Artbank by the department, features contemporary work from Bathurst and Melville Islands in the Northern Territory. The international tour of Kiripuranji began in 2002 and was concluded in August 2006.

*Kickin' Up Dust*: This series of 40 striking photographs from four Indigenous festivals has toured since 2003.

*Gelam Nguzu Kazi – Dugong My Son: Gelam*, leased by the department from Artbank, is a beautiful exhibition of prints from the Torres Strait Islands, (the island of Mua). This exhibition will begin touring in 2006, initially to the Pacific and North and South-East Asia, then on to Europe, over the next three years.

### **Australia International Cultural Council**

The Council has funded Indigenous art exhibitions and the screening of films dealing with Indigenous issues:

#### *Exhibitions*

*The Native Born*: Curated by the Museum of Contemporary Arts, Sydney, The Native Born was an exhibition of objects and representations from Ramingining, Arnhem Land. AICC funding enabled the exhibition to tour to New York, Berlin and Taipei in 2002.

*Spirit Country, Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Art*: An exhibition of contemporary works from northern and central Australia, *Spirit Country*, attracted AICC financial support and toured to Shanghai and Tokyo in 2003.

*Undergrowth: Australian Arts UK 2005 and 2006*, a joint initiative of the AICC and the Australia Council, included the following Indigenous art exhibitions:

- Fiona Foley's exhibition, *Strange Fruit*, at October Gallery, London, 19 October to 25 November 2006 (No funding - promotional support only).
- Lockhart River Art Gang exhibition at October Gallery, London, 6 April - 6 May 2006, featuring work by Lockhart River Community artists Samantha Hobson, Silas Hobson, Adrian King, Fiona Omeenyo, Rosella Namok and Evelyn Sandy (funding towards artist Adrian King to travel to UK to attend opening and present artist talks).
- *Memory as Landscape* exhibition at October Gallery, London, 8 December 2005 - 28 January 2006. Featuring Utopian artists Gloria and Kathleen Petyarr, Poly, Kathleen and Angeline Ngal, and Greenie Purvis Petyarr. Presented in association with Lauraine Diggins Fine Art, Melbourne (No funding - promotional support only).
- *Dreaming the Dreaming* exhibition at Salisbury International Arts Festival 2006 - The Kurrir Kurrir Boards of the East Kimberley exhibition, with works courtesy of The University of Western Australia Berndt Museum of Anthropology, at the Salisbury & South Wiltshire Museum, 26 May - 11 June 2006. (financial support provided for a number of Indigenous projects across artforms at the Festival).

### *Film*

Australia's gift to France in 2003 to commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Nicolas Baudin's exploration of Australia was a collection of contemporary film by Australian Indigenous filmmakers. Housed in Paris, the films are available to institutions for cultural and educational purposes.

With funding from the Australia International Cultural Council, and in conjunction with the Australian Film Commission, DFAT manages the Embassy Film Roadshow. The Roadshow has facilitated the staging of mini film festivals in many countries. Programs at these events have often included films and shorts on Indigenous content and films by Indigenous filmmakers. Among these are:

- *Australian Rules*
- *The Tracker*
- *Rabbit Proof Fence*
- *Radiance*
- *Yolngu Boy*
- *Pilbara Pearl*
- *Black and White*
- *Mimi*
- *Green Bush*

The AICC has also supported a series of overseas film festivals. All have included Indigenous film/s and the Berlin 2001 festival was Indigenous film only:

- Germany - Berlin (2001)
- United States - New York (2001)
- Germany - Berlin (2002)
- United States - New York (2002)

- China - Shanghai (2002)
- United Kingdom - London (2003 and 2004, 2005, 2006)
- Japan - Tokyo (2003)
- United States - Los Angeles (2004)
- India – Kolkata, Chennai, Pune, Goa, Mumbai (2005)
- India – Chennai, Goa, Pune, Mumbai (2006)

### **Australian Visual Arts Touring Program**

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has, for a number of years, toured exhibitions of Australian visual arts and design to countries of South and South-East Asia. This program is managed by the Asialink Foundation. In recent years, exhibitions which have included artworks by Indigenous artists have included:

*Photographica Australis*, which toured to Bangkok, Singapore, Dhaka and Taipei;

*Unwrapped: Australian Textile and Fashion Designers*, to Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Manila;

*Sacred ground beating heart: the art of Judy Watson 1989-2003*, to Ho Chi Minh City, Colombo and Manila;

*I thought I knew but I was wrong: New Video Art From Australia*, to Bangkok, Beijing and Singapore; and

*Supernatural Artificial*, an exhibition of contemporary Australian photography, which included the work of Indigenous artist Darren Siwes, and toured to Bangkok, Bangladesh, Hanoi and Singapore.

### **Cultural Relations Discretionary Grant Program**

This DFAT cultural program provides seed-funding which enables Australian artists and performers to tour overseas. A good proportion of grants approved in recent years have supported overseas exposure for Indigenous visual arts. Grants which have been awarded to Indigenous visual artists, or exhibitions which have included Indigenous cultural product, have included:

- Australian Print Workshop, Victoria, 2002-03;
- Gallery 101, Victoria, 2003-04;
- Ngarinyin Artist Cooperative, Western Australia, 2003-04;
- Powerhouse Museum – *Our Place, Indigenous Australia Now*, New South Wales, 2004-05;
- Musée du quai Branly, various, 2004-05 and 2005-06;
- Museum of Contemporary Art – Destiny Deacon, NSW, 2004-05; and
- South Australian Museum – *Australia, the Country, The People*, SA, 2005-06.

## **International Cultural Visits Program**

Under the auspices of the International Cultural Visits Program (ICV), DFAT annually sponsors visits to Australia by prominent leaders in the arts and cultural industries of a range of countries. The program promotes greater awareness of the sophistication of Australian culture among discerning decision-makers abroad and to assist its future programming overseas.

To ensure international visitors under the ICV program have an accurate perception of Indigenous artists and their unique culture, programs include meetings with both urban and traditional artists and visits to Indigenous communities in rural and remote locations. These include: Tiwi and Bathurst Islands; Fitzroy Crossing, Hermansburg; Yuendumu; Utopia; and Ltyentye Apurte.

Outcomes from the ICV programs have included:

- the *Australian Indigenous Art Commission* to Musée du quai Branly;
- screening of *Ten Canoes* at the Toronto Film Festival;
- programming of Indigenous visual arts content in the AICC's UK, France and India focus programs; and
- *Dreaming their Way: Australian Aboriginal Women Painters*, featuring 33 Indigenous women artists from across Australia, at the National Museum for Women in the Arts, in Washington, in the latter half of 2006.

*Kiripuranji*

**Dates of tour:** July 2002 – August 2006

**Number of countries hosting exhibition:** 29

The following report demonstrates how an overseas post used *Kiripuranji* as a platform to promote greater awareness and understanding of Indigenous Australia and showcase the excellence and diversity of Indigenous art.

***Kiripuranji* in Port Louis, Mauritius – May, 2005**

*Kiripuranji* was the central attraction at the Australia Festival in Port Louis, which showcased Australian cultural and trade exports. Post also engaged a West Australian Indigenous dance group, Wadumbah, to perform at the *Kiripuranji* exhibition venue (the Blue Penny Museum) during the festival, helping to generate considerable media interest and give life and dynamism to the artwork on display.

The *Kiripuranji* exhibition was opened by the Vice-President of Mauritius at a reception with some 150 guests. In his opening speech, the Australian Head of Mission was able to use the presence of the exhibition to underline Australia's recognition of Aboriginal culture as underpinning a new maturity in the way Australian society functioned and to acknowledge the commencement of National Reconciliation Week and what it stands for.

*Kiripuranji* received excellent media coverage. The combination of the artwork with the live performances of Wadumbah captured the attention of the media and wider population. Post collected 16 different articles over a 10-day period on either *Kiripuranji* or Wadumbah, in addition to noting television news stories and radio coverage.

Post was very pleased with the impact of the artwork on the children who had the opportunity to see it. The museum organised daily school groups; the noon timing of the Wadumbah performances allowed both the morning and afternoon school groups visiting the exhibition, as well as the lunchtime crowds in the major tourist area of Port Louis, the opportunity to see the vibrant and energetic indigenous dances from Western Australia. Post also took the opportunity to bus in groups of disadvantaged children from organisations that had been past recipients of Direct Aid Project (DAP) funding to view the dances and see the exhibition. The primary aim of Wadumbah Aboriginal Dance Group was to teach their audiences about Aboriginal culture and provided the perfect accompaniment to the artwork in the *Kiripuranji* exhibition.

Through *Kiripuranji* and Wadumbah, the post achieved effective results in demonstrating the richness of Australian Indigenous arts, dance and music to the wider Mauritian community, with a particular focus on school groups.

### **Gelam Nguzu Kazi: Dugong My Son**

The Images of Australia Branch (IAB) of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, in partnership with the Australian Government's art rental program, Artbank, has developed a new touring exhibition as part of DFAT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program. The exhibition, *Gelam Nguzu Kazi: Dugong My Son*, will replace *Kiripuranji: Contemporary art from the Tiwi Islands*, which returned to Australia in August.

*Gelam Nguzu Kazi: Dugong My Son* is an exhibition of contemporary prints from the Western Torres Strait. Many of the prints in the exhibition are by emerging artists who are already finding national and international recognition for their work. This will also be the first DFAT touring exhibition that has focussed solely on the people and culture of the Torres Strait.

*Gelam* is the result of the Elders of Moa Island, in the Western Torres Strait, agreeing to set up a print studio in Kubin Village so four young printmakers could record the Island's special creation stories utilising their skill at carving in lino blocks. *Gelam*, the dugong, is the primary totem of the people of Moa. The name of the exhibition is taken from the legend of *Gelam* and his mother, *Usar*.

*Gelam Nguzu Kazi* was launched as part of DFAT Canberra's NAIDOC Week activities 3-7 July 2006. The exhibition will tour Australian Missions for three years (until June 2009). The tour schedule is currently being developed.

**Advice on Indigenous protocols**  
**(extract from DFAT Public Diplomacy Handbook June 2005)**

Occasionally, people from non-Indigenous backgrounds who copy and perform Australian Indigenous styles of music and art approach posts seeking assistance or offering to stage performances. There have also been cases where missions have been approached by people who purport to be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, but whose identity is in question, or who may have unethical work practices when dealing with Indigenous artists.

Our position is that the Australian Government should endorse and support only authentic Indigenous products and performers, unless it is clear that there is a genuine cooperative venture between non-Indigenous people and Indigenous people. There are copyright and moral rights to consider and the Government should not be associated with products and artists whose credentials are uncertain or whose Indigenous identity cannot be verified.

To assist posts in dealing with these issues, a publication on Indigenous protocol guidelines, *Valuing Art, Respecting Culture : Protocols for working with the Australian Indigenous Visual Arts and Craft Sector* by Doreen Mellor and Terri Janke, was sent to posts in a general mail-out in September 2001. This publication makes the point that there is a fine line between drawing on and appropriating another identity and culture. The use or reproduction of images, designs and visual symbols or their close equivalents without permission is not acceptable. We would argue that this also applies to all forms of Indigenous culture, especially music.

For reference, the executive summaries from the above publication can be downloaded from the site [www.visualarts.net.au](http://www.visualarts.net.au).

We also recommend *Our Culture: Our Future – Report on Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights*, another publication by Terri Janke, published by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. It can be accessed from [www.atsic.gov.au/issues/Indigenous\\_Rights/intellectual\\_property/Default .asp](http://www.atsic.gov.au/issues/Indigenous_Rights/intellectual_property/Default.asp).

Where the product, person or group's credentials are in question, we recommend you undertake the following steps to determine authenticity:

- research the person/group/product on the world wide web or directories
- contact the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander organisation, business or community with which the person claims to be associated, to verify identity
- contact the Executive Office of the Image of Australia Branch's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program for information and guidance.