

15.02.07

Dear Senators

Thankyou for an invitation to give evidence at the Senate Inquiry into Australia's Indigenous visual arts and craft sector. This is a brief introduction to myself and Red Rock Art.

Background.

I came to the East Kimberley to work in the arts and craft sector after a seventeen year career with Museums [Vic and WA] firstly as an artist and later a senior administrator. In 1992 I began work as Manager with Waringarri Arts Kununurra where I worked for five years alongside some of the great artists in the history of Indigenous art, staging exhibitions nationally and developing artists through painting and printmaking.

In 1997 Jenny my partner and I established Red Rock Art as a non exclusive studio and gallery with a goal to service artists of any culture and political persuasion. I had identified that the established Art Centres did not necessarily cater for all prospective artists certainly non indigenous artists and in many cases Indigenous artists that were living out of country of which in Kununurra there are many. I also believed that the Red Rock Art ' model ' would not require government or corporate funding and that streamlined management could allow for fair returns for artists and success as a business.. Today Red Rock Art is a very small player in the East Kimberley art sector and works with about ten full time artists of which six are indigenous. Red Rock Art provides full studio facilities to all artists creating opportunities for cross cultural activity. RRA provides stretcher and framing resources and each year undertakes an exhibition programme.

The Inquiry - Terms of Reference.

I have read a number of the written submissions to the inquiry and see that most of the 'expected' issues have been raised which include codes of conduct, authenticity, govt support programmes, government funding, education etc, these are all important issues and have been quite well discussed within the submissions. I am happy to try to answer questions regarding these issues at the inquiry.

It is my opinion the single most important issue facing the indigenous art sector today is cultural maintenance with reference to 'terms of reference C.' Artistic and cultural sustainability.

The Indigenous Art Centre Movement of the past 25 years has been an incredible success this cannot be understated, of the many indigenous projects that have been initiated by successive governments the art centre project stands like a beacon. This success has been



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underpinned by the cultural integrity of the art and future success lies with the maintenance of this culture

In many cases and for a long time funding bodies have measured an Art Centre's success by its financial return, those that have been able to put the numbers on the board have been rewarded with more funding, this has all too often shifted the primary focus of the art centre to making sales, further the recent surge of interest and sales and the obvious success of many artists is creating a 'money culture' and is affecting the grass roots of the sector. Without doubt the community art centre model has been highly successful but it may be time to review the structure and policies of community art centres and increase focus on artistic quality and sustainability

I look forward to the inquiry.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Kelly".

Kevin Kelly