

Notes for Senate Enquiry
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N.B Fire-Works gallery through Michael Eather has made certain contributions to this important Senate Enquiry via the larger submission from ART TRADE. I have since been urged to write a few more specific notes from our individual perspective. From the stated terms of reference, this submission would largely pertain to sections:

- (e) Opportunities for strategies and mechanisms that the sector could adopt to improve its practices, capacity and sustainability, including to deal with unscrupulous or unethical conduct;*
- (f) opportunities for existing government support programs for Indigenous visual arts and crafts to be more effectively targeted to improve the sector's capacity and future sustainability; and*
- (g) Future opportunities for further growth of Australia's Indigenous visual arts and craft sector, including through further developing international markets.*

Comment: One of the major concerns already highlighted a by a few commentators is the difficulty with an enquiry to gather strong commentary and perspectives from a variety of the artists and practitioners themselves. Accordingly I have tried to cobble together some notes from my own perspectives as an artist, art dealer and independent curator; based on experiences with our gallery programs and importantly, from speaking directly to many artists; collectors, educators (and listening to Aboriginal family members). The other significant point I must say with the Enquiry is the invisibility of the 'urban condition', in that much of the submissions, for a variety of reasons, are centred around the capricious situation of artists from the Desert and Kimberley and other remote areas (perhaps it's more exotic and lucrative region?). I have compiled some notes that might reference these topics in light also of our history of involvement with urban, rural and remote area Indigenous artists but also collaborative projects, and educational programs we have helped stimulate and coordinate. I would also like to make some notes about our experiences with International projects, namely Europe.

- The urban condition. Are they outside the terms of this enquiry? Scope of artists and sectors of industry?
- Remote area artists are trapped in tyranny of distance.
- Remote area artists are often seen as Aboriginal first and artists second?
- Urban based artists are artists first and Aboriginal second?

Comment:

Whilst it is widely recognized that art from the remote areas in Australia, particularly the big names have grown this industry. It has been the activities of urban based artists and often in collaboration with their non indigenous colleagues that have been responsible for shaping the industry, indeed setting the agenda, agitating the key players and articulating the social and political situation. We also recognize that these issues are not mutually exclusive from the success or otherwise of the artists. Many (urban based Indigenous) artists and spokes-people (such as Lin Onus, Robert Campbell Jnr, Richard Bell, Fiona Foley, Judy Watson, Brenda Croft, Gordon Bennett, Tracey Moffat, Destiny Deacon, Gary Foley, Ian Waldron, to name a few) have made the major inroads into the contemporary Australian art scene. All of these artists sought direct relationships with galleries, curators and institutions.

It is widely known the Indigenous Arts industry has grown and developed at an exponential rate over the previous 20 - 30 years or more, that so many of us involved have often been unsure and unsuspecting or untrained as to the pitfalls, expectations and responsibilities that are required. Indeed many have simply made it up as they went along, for better or for worse.

- Managing the artist/agency/gallery relationship

Comment: Reading through some of the other submissions we have seen proposed modules and codes for the galleries and dealers, including calls for specific training for the art advisors, codes for private agents etc, but what strikes me as equally important is concept of *professional development & training* for artists in order to gain the experience needed to cope with the demands of being a active and professional artist. How do we achieve this outside a tertiary or vocational system? Can we achieve this with existing networks?

More-often this knowledge is acquired simply by experience - by trial and error and time spent working within the 'industry'. For artists it seems critical to gain this knowledge and experience as well as the skills needed for making art and then understanding their options for operating within the market place. It is equally important for the enquiry to consider the position of artists themselves- what motivated their needs and wants. I believe we need to maximize their skills and understandings, their professional development knowledge and industry awareness if we are to regulate the industry in any shape or form. This doesn't mean a new form of dog tagging or authentication, these are all steps backwards. To move forward we need to take the responsibilities of business management, financial advice and art marketing insights to the coal face and seek the collaborative energies of artists, advisors, agents, gallerists, accountants, secondary market representatives, curators, academics and government monitors.

Learning about:

- Artist /art centre obligations or other grass roots support systems;
- Artist/commercial gallery systems;
- The artist / wholesaler systems;
- Artist/ tourist market systems;
- The artist / financial accountability systems - including banking, tax, cash flow, cash management etc.

Collectively our own studio and exhibition projects (over the last twenty years) have looked at creating opportunities for artists - the middle ground nexus between artists, their communities and the marketplace. These represent:

- opportunities to gain professional development through direct art making Studio access, materials, mentoring, technical assistance, experimentation, critical feedback,
- Understanding the commercial gallery process/relationship and the various options that artists have in this respect.

Artists are accordingly faced options when they embark on this career path:

- Do artists attempt to become part of a gallery stable with contractual obligations?
- Do they simply sell (wholesale) works to one or more galleries?
- Do they seek more formal representation within alliance of galleries and art centres? Do they want be part of an exhibition program?
- Do they just want regular sales (money)? A bit of everything perhaps?
- Many artists within our networks - based in urban, rural and remote areas - all work within this range, and each individual has **massaged their own** deals and arrangements.
- For instance, some preferred a bit of money up front and more on the time of primary sale.
- Others all up front and still others consign works to receive funds upon sale being the regular 60/40 artist - gallery split.
- The loaded notion of 'Art' then, for the artists that we have worked alongside, almost always means something of the substance that revolves around financial, social and cultural issues with wider implications also for their family and peers.
- Unless we are addressing all these factors simultaneously, many well intentioned plans and strategies generally fail. This remains a key dynamic of the industry.

Many of the artists within our own gallery stable treat wider Government initiatives and campaigns to provide closer scrutiny within the art industry - including this enquiry – with a grain of salt, perhaps as something that “probably won’t do much to change things”. Indeed there is an over-riding feeling from many artists whom I speak to/have spoken to that:

- authenticity issues pertain mainly with the tourist sector.
- unethical dealer issues don't pertain to them directly as "it's mostly about the desert!"
- Many of the artists we have represented over the years seem to relish the idea that they can be considered foremost as professional artists, without the added tag of being an *Aboriginal artist*. In other words they want to cut it with the mainstream and be presented and recognized in this context.
- Many are curious how to go about it as they are self taught with little formal training. Some of the artists have come through an art centre system and many continue to do so, or a growing number seem to deal with multiple agencies and galleries concurrently, usually on their own terms.

Comment:

Each artist usually manages to forge a **relationship** tailor made to their situation and requirements. This relationship seems to be a vital ingredient and reading through many of the submissions of this enquiry. How do we engender the standards, ethics and professional dynamics for all parties?

- I believe there is something to be gained in the process of collaboration between bush and city, between Indigenous and Non Indigenous cultural systems and values, between community and gallery experiences, between public and private sectors, between the entrepreneurial and the educational.
- There needs to be cross platform training opportunities and experiences for artists and agencies and the only way to do this is to further embrace a *multi- tiered system*.
- A multi tiered system that doesn't simply cater for one stream of Aboriginal art making approaches which support Art centres as a primary level of development, but also recognizes other ways and means.
- Regional peculiarities make any *Pan-Aboriginal solution* a recipe for disaster! We have a fabulous variety of art production that is not going to diminish, and as one commentator has intimated: "Rather than focus on what is wrong with the industry lets celebrate what is good about it!"

So how? Importantly, there needs to be grass roots support in the communities for art centers and there also needs to be recognition that many artists, as individuals will want to find other ways. The other important point to consider here is that the most successful art centre in the country would perhaps be Papunya Tula Artists, which is a Pty Ltd company. Might we consider this infrastructure as a direction to forge further?

- How do we engender self- determination and ownership for Aboriginal stake holders in this burgeoning industry?
- Clearly it comes back to a mix of collaboration and joint venturing, where entrepreneurs in all camps might find support and guidance from the Private and Public sectors to create new models.

- Where commercial gallery dealers re-think their strategies to compensate for a process of change and professional development for the artists and communities they work with and/or represent. Whether this is in the form of formal contracts, gentleman's agreements or whatever, I'm certain we need to embrace discussion here.

Comment: "Unscrupulous and Unethical Conduct"- Good Guys/Bad Guys:

The Indigenous Arts Industry and its workers also are now realising that in 'the art world' there are essential strata systems with big players. Indeed there has always been an elitist system at work, largely controlled by non-indigenous persons, who will make and break careers. They are the taste makers and they will choose who they are going to put their energies behind.

The fact that some of the big players are stepping into the Aboriginal art market is significant yet many seem puzzled that existing systems and structures don't work in the black world. Many generalisations and assumptions are made; Indigenous galleries are opening and closing all the time and many business plans simply fail.

There are two buzz words that are widely and in my opinion loosely used that shall comment about. Firstly, the concept of '*community*' is often used, as a broad brush attempt to talk about Indigenous majority. It is as if the mere reference to the idea of an Aboriginal Community somehow legitimizes opinions and quite often very complex cultural concerns. This is clearly one of many over zealous generalizations that are part of a wider problem that the art industry inherits. A further dilemma is that in some cases upon closer inspection, we may see that a community might actually be a place that non Indigenous persons simply want to get into and Indigenous people want to escape from?!

The other loaded word widely used is the concept of an '*artist*'. So many people come into our gallery and ask about artists, processes, provenance, investment etc. I often begin to explain that whilst there are many Aboriginal people in the communities *painting* not all of them are *artists*. It is a strong term and loosely used in my opinion. An artist is someone who has an extremely long apprenticeship and certainly needs to display (within any cultural context) confidence, imagination, talent, intuition, discipline and good management. An artist cannot be created quickly and in Aboriginal terms, an artists might be better termed as someone who has custodianship, seniority, wide ranging respect, power, and ultimately with it widespread responsibilities to his or her family and its extensions. This certainly separates many *painters* from the *artists*. It is therefore vital that galleries and marketers comprehend that the never ending queue of *new artists* are not grandstanded and paraded unnecessarily as "the next big thing", or the "next Emily", "the next Rover" etc. Galleries and dealers can't provide this exposure and energy for all comers to the trade. Hence there are many sectors and layering within the Aboriginal art industry and much debate how the sectors are rationalized, marketed and in case, policed.

Compounding the problem of regulating the Indigenous Art 'Industry' if we can refer to it as such, is the a trend that many self motivated Indigenous artists particularly in rural / remote areas, will often breach their respective arrangements of trust, and deal (simultaneously) direct with community art advisors, alternative dealers, agencies even public institutions. Often this is because they have no prior training or experience to that informs them otherwise. Or perhaps it's because they are exploring what seems to them as a free market?

"The problem one always has in sticking up for some of the "so-called carpet-baggers" as possibly some form of credible link in the chain, is that I might be accused, even stymied of not supporting "community' ideals" - whatever that means. This is indeed not the case. I believe, and many other galleries and agencies as well I suspect, all seek clarity and fairness in an industry that is continually out maneuvering itself. To simplify the whole argument is essentially to nullify it. We must be careful not to polarize the debate with clichés of good guys versus bad guys and broad generalizations within any community politic.

Aboriginal artists that I have spoken to are largely bored or mildly amused at this seemingly recycled debate. Wasn't all this going on in the 1980's? Some may even remind us that Margaret Preston was working in a similar grey area in the 1940's. Several urban based artists appear even miserable, perhaps envious, at the repetitious attention and the ongoing fascination from Eurocentric viewpoints with the noble savage out in remote areas.

The debate about the supply and demand of Aboriginal art usually starts out with cries of concern for fairness and better treatment of the indigenous artists - which if it stayed on this topic would be well worthy of the national attention. Ultimately it drifts into issues of corruption, authenticity, and provenance and then ultimately polarized back into a simplistic crisis of carpet-bagging versus community ideals."¹

"We – the industry and market- must be careful not to polarise this supply/demand debate with clichés of the good guys versus the bad guys. A percentage of good works exist in all camps, and will sustain their appeal and value long after the politics is forgotten. Aboriginal art is a powerful movement that is indeed still moving. Whether curators, collectors and critics like it or agree with it, or whether gallerists and auction houses sanction it, the revenue funneled into the industry by independent and non-community sources -often directly to artists and their families - in cash or in-kind, provides a significant amount to this burgeoning Aboriginal art 'bubble'. A flooded market and a plethora of mediocre or poor art ultimately make the good stuff even more desirable. We simply need to be transparent about our dealings and comprehend that some facets are simply beyond anyone's control.

¹ Michael Eather *people, process and provenance* catalogue notes for "three large rooms" 2006 Fire-Works gallery.

So what of the future? I believe a multi-tiered system that provides adequately for community based artists as well as those opting for independent agency, or both, will ultimately prevail. I take this 'grey moral ground' for in due course it provides greater options for the artists who cannot and should not stay sedentary. Additionally it provides collectors and enthusiasts with a broader range of works to sift through. Loyalty from all players to their preferred galleries and dealers will ultimately help them make informed decisions. This industry is bigger than any one gallery, any one agency or any one policy. Industry opinions, like this one, will always come and go. Great art somehow manages to live on. It's quite brilliant!"²

And here an extract from an article featured in *The Age* in 2006 by noted art critic Robert Nelson:

"There are undoubtedly some shonky operators out there but there is also an underlying esteem for Aboriginal art in Australia and beyond. The zeal to prophesy about a market catastrophe strikes me as precipitate if not unseemly. The current debates about Aboriginal art reveal a profound insecurity in Australian culture and its reception of art. I understand the motive of wanting to protect the prestige of Aboriginal art; and in one sense the scruples are clearly laudable, especially when shady dealers extort unreasonable profits from exploited artists. But these debates also reveal a white inability to handle artistic production in an indigenous framework. There are lots elements to their work that look out-of-control. With some scrutineers, I get the feeling that they think there's just too much of it. It's produced at a much greater rate than European art - perhaps, it is suspected, because several hands are involved - and it comes out of communities in spontaneous ways that are impossible to regulate. The provenance of many works may be obscure."...

Cases of outright fraud (which can't be condoned in any circumstance) seem to be very infrequent, and no one has done the research to prove that it's any more prevalent with Aboriginal art than with European art. But somehow we become a bit more righteous with Aboriginal art.

There's no doubt that you can pick up Aboriginal work that claims to have been painted by a famous desert artist, when it has been painted by a community. I can't get upset about this impure authorship. Aboriginal communities and individuals aren't so property-oriented and we shouldn't demand that European values dictate their ethos in art.

As a collector, you have to ask: is it a good work or not? If you like it, how important is the attribution? The collector needn't be anxious about being gullible unless the express purpose in buying the work is not to build a collection but to sell the work again at a higher price.

This speculative activity could become a problem, because the next buyer, facing a larger bill, may want to see stronger evidence of authorship - a guarantee that the piece really is by the famous artist mentioned. A certain amount of speculation undoubtedly occurs, and if poor or shonky attributions cut this out, it has to be hailed as a very good thing.

² ibid

What are the legitimate reasons for buying Aboriginal art? You buy the work because you like it, not because it has a certificate. The idea that the work is automatically devalued by being painted by a relative strikes me as paranoid and regressive. After decades of postmodernism, the fetishisation of authorship is at an all-time high. We have yet to catch up with Aboriginal culture in this matter, which has a much more generous and inclusive attitude to artistic work. The prophets of indigenous art-market doom have another horror story. It's called carpet bagging. This is when dealers meet up with desert artists and strike a bargain.

"If you paint these 10 canvases, I'll give you that four-wheel-drive over there." Done. So the artist sometimes goes off to the dealer's house or backyard studio, where Belgian linen and liters of paint lie at the ready.

As each work is produced, the dealer is busy with the digital camera, recording the stages with the famous artist working away and finally holding up the complete work. A strong proof of authorship can therefore be produced with the eventual sale. In the course of this labour, the artist may be treated well, or not so well, but the practice is frowned upon in all events because it is based on opportunism and returns relatively little to the community.

Even when conducted honourably, there's no professional sustain in the deal. Once the artist has completed the set project, there is no more money flowing to his or her family. It is easy to get taken down, where the dealer - John Batman style - may feel under no obligation to share the profits once the promised cash and goods are handed over.

The kind of strategic career management that the centres work towards is sometimes undermined by these operators...

... In our brief history of reconciliation, there are thousands of things to feel guilty about. The reception of Aboriginal art is not one of them. It's a relatively trivial distraction and it would be better to focus on what is good and healthy about the scene, given that there is so much to admire and learn. If there's concern about the dodgy side of carpetbagging, the answer is to build the economy and welfare of Aboriginal artists so that they're not so vulnerable to swift and shady deals. The vast sums of money required to regulate the market - which would be impossible and would promote crime - would be much better spent on health services for Aborigines.

Meanwhile, to seek to induce guilt in white Australian buyers will contribute only to the fragility of the scene and the community.."³

notes: section f "opportunities for existing govt. support programs"

Another reality check we must consider is that - even for successful operation such as Papunya Tula Artists - is that it is virtually impossible for this successful centre to cater to all the artists' desires and needs, or at least satisfy the demands made upon them for money, canvas, advances, support, travel assistance and administrative and social support. Like wise it is virtually

³ Robert Nelson, *Treasures in the Backyard*, The Age, April 22, 2006

impossible for the centre to satisfy the needs of all their private clientele, institutions and commercial galleries wanting to exhibit, consign, purchase and commission works from their artists. Therefore the situation has been ripe for many years for independent agencies to step into the arena. In an over heated market I've been told numerous anecdotes and stories by independent operators and other colourful characters, that whilst they will often seek 'town artists' to work for them, it is just as common for artists and their families, to come knocking at their doors asking for canvas, paints, money, advances etc. Often this will justify these people's aspirations, as independent operators, to be a credible middle person in the chain of events. Unfortunately, some have been very unscrupulous and have been guilty of the carpet bagging tag, in that they exploit these situations, there is also the opposite. There are many unwritten stories of people simply happy to work on a grass roots level with 'big name' and 'no name' artists to advance their collective causes. Indeed, I believe it is a fact not many non indigenous art enthusiasts possess the intestinal fortitude to do such work over long periods of time. Suffice to say; whilst we are talking about perceptions within the industry, there have also been isolated cases of untrained, ill equipped and misinformed art advisors in community art centres who have squandered opportunities and trust between the artists, communities, galleries and the market place. These are isolated cases but they reflect the complexities of wider perceptions and expectations. More often there dedicated arts workers in all camps, and art centres particularly will continue to be a vital conduit and support service.

Fire-Works Case studies

3 examples how FWG nurtured relationships, including professional training, cultural exchange, developed and managed artists careers by building trust, respect, dialogue, understanding, how mainstream galleries operate how Indigenous artists think... processes different ...

1. **Michael Nelson Jagamara**- Independent supporting for a professional artist (remote area based artist/ city based gallery).
2. **Campfire group projects**; Collaboration and joint venturing (see SHOOSH! Publication Institute of Modern Art for project history).
3. **NEW flames INC.** privately funded foundation offering studio based residencies in the city for indigenous artists. Brochures, press releases available.

NOTES: Michael Nelson Jacamar -individual artist/gallery relationship.

I met Michael in 1989 at Papunya. Michael Nelson Jagamara began working with Fire-Works gallery network in earnest in 1996. During the period and up to 2001 all communications were mediated via Warumpi Arts (Papunya Council), until they folded. However, Michael had previously traveled extensively overseas and interstate with his work and was acutely aware how his art sat in the marketplace. He is articulate and has an enquiring mind. He wanted to maximize

his position as a successful artist and create a special relationship with galleries and the market place. Over the years 1996-present we have developed a working relationship:

- Catering for his ongoing personal and family needs,
- community obligations including ceremonies,
- day to day funds – e.g. food money,
- lump sum payments, funds towards travel, vehicle repairs etc.
- career management, documentation of works etc.
- In return Michael Nelson supplies paintings and participates in numerous individual and collaborative projects.
- He travels regularly to be present at exhibition and events,
- endeavours to work exclusively for Fire-Works gallery, although it is mutually agreed that Michael can and will approach other agencies from time to time, when necessary.
- Michael has received a weekly retainer via internet banking since 1999.
- He receives lump sum payments for workshops.
- He receives bonus payments at the time of sale.
- He often asks for advances.
- Financial records and inventory of works are kept and have regularly been sent to Michael so as to maintain respect (transparency) and understanding of the administrative and financial processes.
- Incidentally, Michael has won two art prizes in recent years, the Gold Coast Art prize in 2002 (\$15,000), The Tattersalls Art Prize (\$20,000) in 2006. Michael has been collected by numerous private collectors and several major institutions including Queensland Art gallery, Ho-Am Museum Korea, and participated in the second Asia Pacific Triennial.

NOTES: Other models/ case studies

Campfire Group (Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Artists bases in Brisbane 1990-2002). During that period, Campfire has worked closely with over 50 urban based practicing indigenous artists, and at least 60-70 others from remote areas or non indigenous artists and workers. Projects were tailored to the times, but certainly some issues we faced then are still prevalent today. e.g. Ethical dealing, artist/commercial gallery relationships, copyright, appropriation, protocols. Out of the consultancy projects and exhibitions grew **Fire-Works gallery** a commercial gallery independently owned and operated that has staged a robust exhibition program since 1993. Fire-Works has coordinated numerous satellite projects both nationally and internationally including curating two major survey exhibitions to museums in Europe, Art Fairs and Exchange Programs. In 2003 Michael Eather alongside a coterie of private patrons and sponsors established **NEW flames INC** a not for profit foundation for hosting Indigenous artist in residencies, whereby opportunities are offered to selected artists to explore and experiment and indeed seek new ways of working.

Fire-Works gallery and artists, certainly doesn't pretend to have the silver bullet solution, but we can at least discuss ideas and projects we have initiated that are beginning to have an effect. In recent years we have developed in conjunction with a team of private supporters, **NEW flames INC**. This is a not for profit incorporated foundation that essentially looks to provide major opportunities in the form of *artist in residencies* for indigenous artists at our Brisbane base. This has been privately funded and apart from Fire-Works gallery receiving several small project grants, fellowships etc from local, state and federal arts funding bodies, there has been no operational costs sought from Govt. in our 20 year history. They have all been financed from the success or otherwise of the projects, the sale of art and the goodwill of private sponsorship and philanthropy. This has certainly taught us to consider the views of industry personnel from all sides of the fence and in that spirit I have formed much of my opinion. Here, our Sponsors who are largely private collector clients obtain an enormous amount of satisfaction from directly assisting artists in the form of tax deductible donations. They want to help and they are pleased that they are playing a direct hand. The artists too are encouraged to work within team and perhaps understand that their own efforts and energies they can create artistic and economic victories, independent of Government handouts or the like. There is a winning feeling when all this is in place, and as much as we welcome and need Government assistance to this industry, we must also consider the perceptions of those who work in the private sector and do not rely on it. We must also consider - and this may really upset some persons - that Government representatives don't actually control this industry, and nor should they! But there are obviously calls and expectations for 'them' to police it. 'They' are there as a safety net and it is the multi faceted conglomeration of independent, private, commercial and community agencies that actually drive this industry.

Notes on section g) International markets:

Comment:

My thoughts on the international perspectives of Aboriginal Art are tempered with mixed responses from working with commercial galleries and museums abroad. I may disappoint some enthusiasts? I have had reasonably good financial returns from exhibition sales in Europe, but if we had to equate the amount of time and money spent realizing these returns, it would not look so bountiful. Whilst opinions obviously vary within sectors, these views emanate from what might be described as serious art connoisseurs. These people are not exactly describing much of the exhibited Indigenous works afield as *ethnographic*, but they certainly see it as being made and presented in isolation to the larger canon of contemporary art. Such that whilst some of it is undoubtedly stunning and collectable, most of it simply 'doesn't rate' in the same context or the current polemics raised with the wider bodies of contemporary art being made in Europe, UK and USA etc.

Many art enthusiasts find it hard to pin point individual names and styles from amongst the large group shows that have showcased European and other International venues over the last 20 years. Apart from say Emily Kngwarreye, Clifford Possum and Rover Thomas, many can't get their names around many others. Whilst not dismissing the artists or the movement, they relegate it to another tier of art practice. They concede it is very interesting but not the main game. Although, enthusiasts who actually visit Australia, and get to see and feel the art and country from a closer range, ultimately have a more sympathetic view of the artwork as a whole. Indeed many tourists have gone on to become great and passionate collectors. However, when we send a lot of Indigenous art abroad other factors take over. Something of the holistic Australian experience is missing and many viewers abroad simply don't get it. But regardless of these thoughts, Aboriginal art certainly continues to sell overseas, on many levels. However I do feel it needs to be better contextualized in a framework that International audiences can digest so it can be grown. It needs significant (professional) follow up - perhaps this might mean more illustrated catalogues with translated texts? More solo exhibitions that assist audiences to understand individual expression as well as community ideals? There have been so many group survey shows and so few solo shows. Audiences get lost in the plethora of tribal names and references, and it all seems so ethnographic and locked up in exoticism. The industry should support the more adventurous galleries to liaise with the younger and informed curators abroad, to exhibit professionally in International Art Fairs, and indeed show a range of *individual* Aboriginal artists, from cities and communities, even alongside other Australian and International artists. These are strategies we try to employ and whilst it is very slow and costly to make in roads, we are certainly getting the right responses.

Background: *Michael Eather is an artist and also a freelance curator of Indigenous Art. Between 1987-1990 Eather curated 'Balance 1990' a major survey show of Indigenous Urban and Remote Area artists, alongside other Australian artworks at the Queensland Art Gallery. Following this, Eather with other Brisbane based indigenous artists' co-founded Campfire group, a collective of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists working on contemporary art projects and commissions. Eather is Director of Fire-Works gallery in Brisbane, established in 1993. Whilst Eather has exhibited solo paintings and sculpture since 1986 he has maintained a strong interest in collaborative artworks and cross-cultural projects.*