16 April 2013

Chief Minister Adam Giles tonight announced an exciting new direction for Northern Territory arts and museums, with the Country Liberals Government to establish the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) as an independent statutory authority.

Mr Giles delivered the news at a cocktail event at the MAGNT in Darwin this evening to celebrate 22 years of Telstra sponsoring the National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award.

"With the growth of Northern Australia, there are many opportunities out there for investment in the Territory’s arts sector and giving MAGNT independence will ensure we grab these important opportunities with both hands and make the most of them," Mr Giles said.

"In a climate where Labor and former Treasurer and now Leader of the Opposition Delia Lawrie has saddled us with $5.5 billion worth of debt, unfortunately Government cannot contribute as much funding as we would like to our museums.

"However, our plans to establish a statutory authority will allow MAGNT to directly engage with business and the wider community to secure investment and reduce bureaucratic red tape.

"It will also enable the institution to place more focus on Asian Engagement, a key objective of the Country Liberals Government, through new programs, exhibitions and cultural exchanges with the region."

Minister for Arts and Museums Matt Conlan said the new legislation will reinvigorate the Territory arts and culture sector.

"A healthy arts and culture sector in the Northern Territory is critical to growing our tourism industry which is vital to our plans to expand the Territory economy," Mr Conlan said.

"Allowing MAGNT to become an independent statutory authority will open up the institution to philanthropic donations and corporate sponsorship which will see it thrive now and well into the future.

"Our arts and museums are rich, diverse and like nothing else in Australia. We have something incredibly special to offer tourists from around the world and these changes will allow us to showcase our arts better and fight harder for the tourism dollar.

"The new structure will allow MAGNT to work with the private sector to develop partnerships and sponsorships that will further enhance exhibitions and public programs.

"It will help make our museums bigger and better while continuing to support the regional museums throughout the Northern Territory through the delivery of the Regional Museums Grant Support Program."
The Chair of the Museums and Art Galleries Board of the NT, Mr Allan Myers AO QC welcomed the Government’s proposed changes.

“This is a very important step for the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory because it will enable the new authority to continue to develop and build its collections and programs for the enjoyment of the many thousands of visitors it attracts every year,” Mr Myers said.

New legislation establishing the MAGNT as an independent statutory authority is expected to be in place by the end of the year.

**Media Contact:**
Lisa Andrews 0401 579 963