MINISTER FOR ARTS AND MUSEUMS

PAPUNYA ART EXHIBITED FOR THE FIRST TIME

March 1st, 2013

Some of Australia’s most significant Aboriginal art works will go on display to the public for the very first time at The Araluen Arts Centre in Alice Springs.

Minister for Arts and Museums, Matt Conlan, will officially open the Papunya Boards Display at the Albert Namatjira Gallery tonight.

“This is an historic moment,” Mr Conlan said.

“The Papunya Boards represent the very beginnings of modern Aboriginal art, but until today, have been hidden from view and shrouded in secrecy.

“It was in the Aboriginal settlement of Papunya, 250km west of Alice Springs, where in 1971 the Western Desert Art movement was born, changing the face of Aboriginal art forever.

“Over 10 years, 1000 paintings, to be known as the Papunya Boards, were produced in the community.

“The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) owns what is considered to be the single most important collection of these early Papunya boards, 226 paintings collected from 1971-1980.

“Now, for the very first time, the public can view eight of these historical masterpieces together.

“The eight bark paintings on display at the Araluen Arts Centre are the works of Mick Namarari Tjapaljarri, Uta Uta Tjangala, Old Walter Talpulpa Tjampitjinpa, Charlie Tjararu (Wartuma) Tjungurrayi, Johny Warangkkula Tjupurrula, Shorty Lungkata Tjungurrayi and Long Jack Philippus Tjakamarra.

“Each of the paintings represents various aspects of life including hunting scenes, bush tucker and dreaming places.

“The eight Papunya boards are considered to be among the most significant and unique pieces in MAGNT collection.

“The pieces were deemed suitable to be viewed by the public in November last year, following the release of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA) report that

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stated 163 of the 226 paintings could be displayed without breaching any cultural sensitivities.

“The exhibition further demonstrates the Territory’s reputation as a must-visit destination for traditional and iconic Indigenous art.

“In the year ended September 2012, 24% of interstate and 54% of international visitors to the NT visited a museum or art gallery, demonstrating a high degree of interest in Territory art.

“This exhibition forms part of an easy to follow art trail that includes visits to art centres in remote communities, centuries-old rock art places like Ubirr and Arnhem Land and other exhibitions at Araluen and MAGNT.

“The Northern Territory Government is proud to exhibit the Papunya Boards and enable their important story to be told to the public for the first time.”

The eight Papunya Boards will be on display at the Araluen Arts Centre from tomorrow for the next 12 months.

An exhibition of reproduced works will also be on display at Voyages Ayers Rock from mid-March until June 2013.

A larger exhibition of the Papunya Boards is currently being planned and is expected to tour nationally and internationally at the end of 2014 or early 2015.

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