TELSTRA AND NT GOVERNMENT ART DEAL IS GOOD FOR THE TERRITORY

Chief Minister and Minister for Arts and Museums, Clare Martin, said that a new deal signed by Telstra and the Territory Government will continue to build the profile of Australia’s richest Indigenous art prize, the Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Award.

Ms Martin said that five year deal, worth over $1 million, was a major boost and would help Territory tourism and job creation in the bush.

“Indigenous art creates jobs and drives economic growth in the bush,” she said.

“This award is the most lucrative art award in Australia and places a national and international spotlight on the Territory as the home of indigenous art.

“I look forward to Telstra and the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory continuing to work together to further elevate of this significant event.”

She said her Government has delivered and funded ($3.1 million over 3-years) the first ever indigenous arts strategy, Building Strong Arts Business, in 2003 and was committed to growing the industry.

“The industry generates millions of dollars for indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the Territory every year - it is a major drawcard for our tourism industry,” she said.

“Almost 5,000 Indigenous visual artists live and work in the Territory and approximately $38M was spent on NT Indigenous art and craft in 2001-02 and around $100M in commercial galleries national wide.”

Earlier this month, the Chief Minister signed an historic agreement with Prime Minister John Howard setting out priority areas and strengthening government efforts in key Indigenous areas including the arts.

The Overarching Agreement on Indigenous Affairs between the Commonwealth and Northern Territory of Australia is the first new bilateral agreement to come out of the June 2004 Council of Australian Governments’ (COAG) and sets the way forward in the post ATSIC era.

It will ensure funding is better targeted and one of the first schedules agreed to under this new agreement is for arts. Ms Martin said savings made through streamlining of government services will go directly to programs on the ground.

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