



*Cover image:*  
Detail of a painting  
by Martumili Artists  
Dulcie Gibbs, Muni Rita  
Simpson and Mantararr  
Rosie Williams.

*Opposite page:*  
Well number 1, near  
Wiluna.





# The Canning Stock Route Project

is currently in development. A traditional language title  
will soon be released by Aboriginal stakeholders.







*...It is important for the stories to be told for the Stock Route, from the Aboriginal point of view. If kartiya [non-Aboriginal people] are celebrating 100 years, Aboriginal people should tell their story for history too... People want to talk about their Country.*



*They are still worrying about Country. These stories are important. [Kumanjayi]\* said he is getting old now and asks “who are these young people who will keep going to Country?”*

**Joy Nuggett, Walmajarri, Interpreter and Cultural liaison Officer.**

\* This senior person passed away during the most recent trip to Country.



*Opposite page:*  
Detail of a painting by  
Warlayirti artist Eubena  
Nampitjin.

*This page:*  
Dulcie Gibbs and  
Muni Rita Simpson  
from Martumili  
Artists working on a  
collaborative painting.

**In development since July 2006** an unprecedented, alliance of agencies is working together on a pioneering cultural initiative which celebrates Western Australia's rich Aboriginal heritage.

The Canning Stock Route Project is a groundbreaking model for economic, social, cultural and environmental capacity building for remote area Aboriginal people.

The Project supports the transfer of knowledge between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, enriching our understanding of ourselves as a nation.

Nurtured over many months of planning, conversation and consultation, the Canning Stock Route Project is in an exciting phase of its evolution, to be launched to global audiences in 2009.



**The Canning Stock Route** was forged by Alfred Canning in 1906 as a means to transport cattle between Halls Creek to Wiluna. It has historical significance for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, both of whom drove cattle along its route which runs approximately one third of the length of Western Australia, through the Country of nine Aboriginal language groups.

As well as being the means by which many Aboriginal people first made contact with Europeans, the CSR has also been the location of a number of massacres; it has been a site of weapons testing; a locus for both employment in the pastoral industry and removal from traditional areas for work or as a result of displacement.

For Aboriginal people it naturally has numerous other cultural significances. These relate to the vast cosmologies which are interlaced across the desert, comprising a body of traditional Law which is located in and arises from the land and governs all aspects of Aboriginal life.

The language groups whose country intersects the CSR are represented by the arts and cultural organisations: Warlayirti Artists (Balgo), Paraku Indigenous Protection Authority (Mulan), Ngurra Artists (Wangkajunga), Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency Aboriginal Corporation (Fitzroy Crossing), Yulparija Artists (Bidyadanga), Martumili Artists (Newman), Papunya Tula Artists (Kiwirrkurra), Kayili Artists (Patjarr), Tjukurba Gallery (Wiluna).







*...Canning Stock  
Route parnatju ngurra  
wakaninpa.*

**Eubena Nampitjin, Kukatja, Warlayirti Artists**

*...That's what I'm painting,  
my Country, the Canning  
Stock Route.*

**This is a journey...** A journey of connection and revelation; A journey which connects the past with the future; A journey which will tell new stories of Australia to the whole world; Stories which can only be told through Aboriginal eyes and voices.















*...To tell our story to the world,  
we can do it by painting.  
Paint this Country. But you  
got to get permission first:  
“Can we paint from the start  
to the end?” Maybe I can just  
paint in my area, and other  
people from that side can  
paint that way and join it up  
together.*

*...Make a map out of the  
painting! And they can know  
where's that place not to go;  
where's that place you can  
go. All way along. That map  
will show everything that  
way. It would make a really  
good map.*

**Mervyn Street, Gooniyandi Jaru,  
Chairman Mangkaja Artists and Cultural Liaison Officer (edited extract).**













WELL

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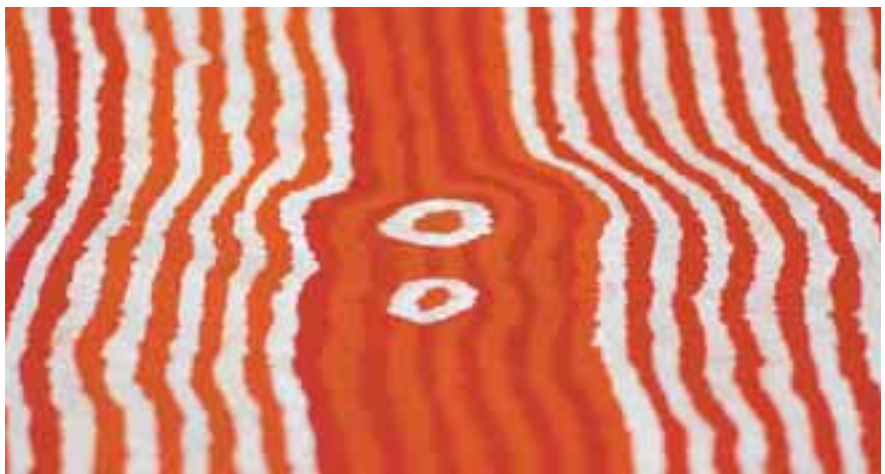
WELL 14

**In July and August 2007**, over 60 Aboriginal artists from nine remote art centres and communities circling the Western Desert came together for an epic five week journey through a Country that has many names and many stories.

For the last 100 years this track has been known to many as the Canning Stock Route. Travelling in Country along the Route, four artist's bush-camps were held at Durba Hills, Kil Kil [Well 36], Kuduarra [Well 46] and Nyarnu [Lake Stretch].

Some artists were returning to places they had left as children, others were reconnecting with family dispersed across the desert; some were reclaiming histories passed down. All were journeying to tell their stories, share their narratives and to create.

Wherever they camped, they painted, recalled memories, and shared stories learned from parents, grandparents, aunties and uncles.







*...Listening to the old  
peoples' story from the past.  
Good ones, sad ones. Now  
it's up to us to tell them to  
our future generations.*

**Putuparri Tom Lawford, Wangkajunga, Cultural Liaison Officer, Kimberley  
Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre.**



*...Our father and our uncle  
– been droving on that  
Canning Stock Route....  
They've been handling the  
cattle all the way along,  
droving to Wiluna. From  
there, they used to go back  
to Billiluna again, after a  
long time. Very, very long  
time, they been working  
around there, branding or*



*mustering. That's a very long  
story. But them old people,  
they all been pass away, all  
finish, nothing, and only son  
left over now...*

**Ned Cox, Wangkajunga, Ngurra Artists.**





Opposite page:  
Droving cattle along the  
CSR, detail of a triptych  
by Mervyn Street from  
Mangkaja Arts.  
Water-colour on paper.

*...The white man history  
has been told and it's today  
in the book. But our history  
is not there properly. That's  
one way to tell 'em. We've  
got to tell 'em through our  
paintings. They might see it  
through there.*

**Clifford Brooks, Martu, Tjukurba Gallery.**

...I know that kartiya  
[non-Aboriginal] fella been  
putting all the road. Still, I  
reckon, only lately. That road  
been put by that Canning  
mob... lately. But we trust  
this bloke [points to painting  
of Kaningarra and Kurtal,  
Dreamtime ancestors].  
Dreamtime, that's really true.  
Before, used to be blackfella  
Country...



*That Canning Stock Route  
they been only put'em  
lately...only yesterday.  
Before this, blackfella  
Country, soakwater, jila,  
jumu, rockhole. Now it's  
Canning Stock Route, for  
anybody to use. Before, it  
was these two men [taps  
Kaningarra painting].  
Dreamtime story. Before, it  
was blackfella Country.*

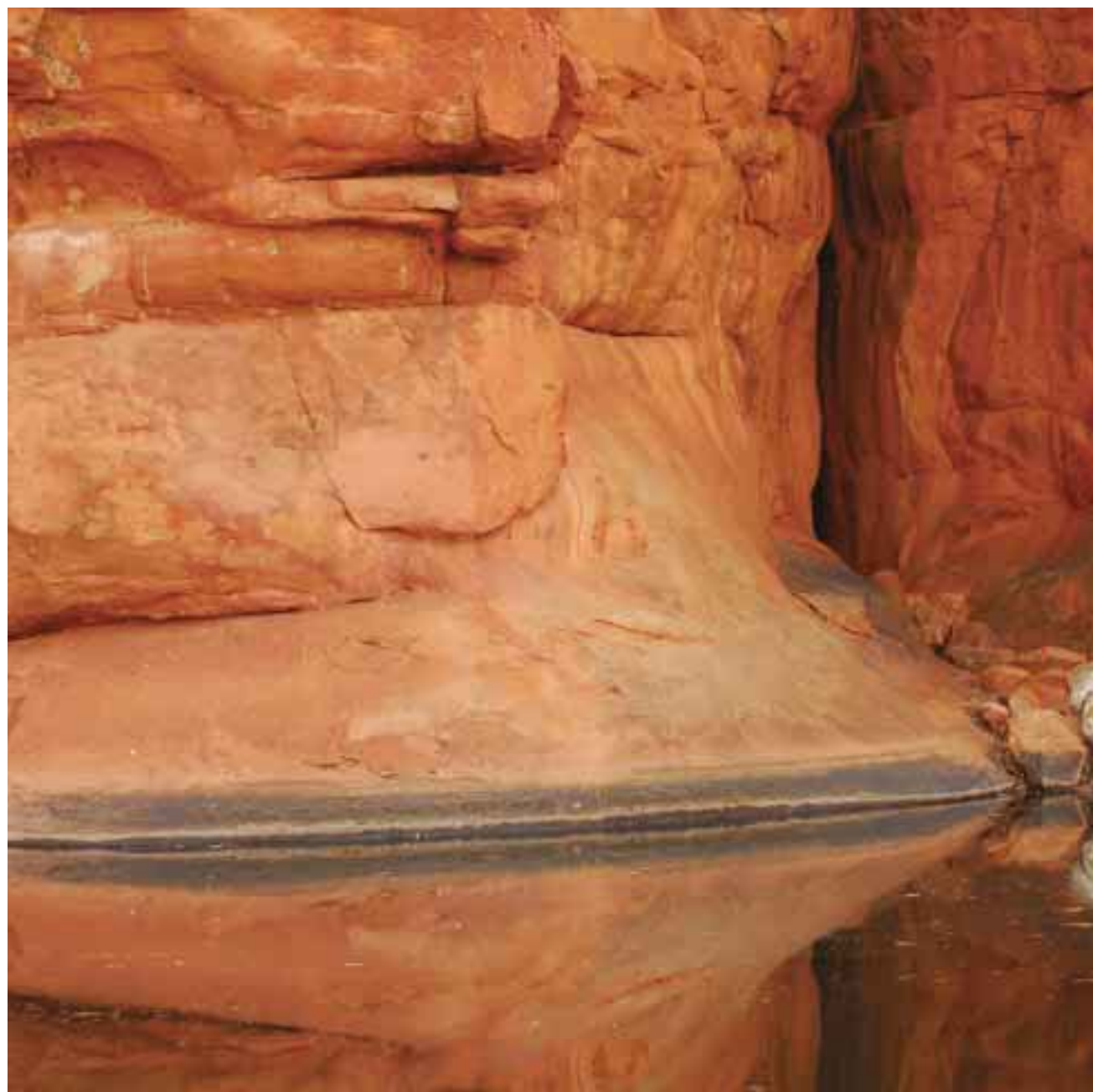
**Tommy May, Wangkajunga, Mangkaja Artists (edited extract).**

**The Indigenous Land Corporation** is proud to provide significant financial support to the Canning Stock Route Project in recognition of the diverse land management practices Indigenous Australian's contribute, particularly cultural practice and the importance culture has in looking after Country. The Project traverses lands where Native Title is determined, Indigenous pastoral leases exist and where Indigenous Protected Areas are declared. The Indigenous Land Corporation recognises the rich and indispensable contribution of Indigenous knowledge and cultural practice to the historical and contemporary development of land management.

In supporting the Canning Stock Route journey, the Indigenous Land Corporation seeks to secure direct employment and training initiatives for Indigenous individuals to explore and express culture inextricably linked to spiritual and physical connection to land. The Indigenous Land Corporation's contribution to employment and training of Indigenous individuals in the Project also expands the capacity of local Indigenous art centres to produce, document and collate rich and vibrant artistic works and establish collaborative networks into the national and international arts industry.

**Allan Padgett, Manager, Indigenous Land Corporation, Western Division.**







**BHP Billiton Iron Ore** is extremely proud to be the founding sponsor of The Canning Stock Route Project (CSR Project), an ambitious Aboriginal cultural development that has emerged from the dramatic desert landscapes of Western Australia.

Over the past three years, BHP Billiton Iron Ore has developed an award-winning, collaborative partnership with FORM which has seen a variety of dynamic, community-enhancing Projects delivered in the Pilbara.

The CSR Project creates diverse economic and professional development opportunities for the remote communities involved. It also enables some of Australia's most talented Aboriginal artists to develop innovative new works, enhance their national and international profile, and pass their skills and cultural knowledge onto younger generations.

BHP Billiton Iron Ore is proud to stand alongside the CSR's other major partners, the Indigenous Land Corporation and Lotterywest, in this Project that promises to leave lasting benefits for the many participants, as well as the wider Western Australian and global community. It is BHP Billiton Iron Ore's desire to leave a legacy of social, cultural and economic post-boom expansion and sustainability that outlives our physical presence in the region.

**Richard O'Connell, Regional Manager, Sustainability,  
BHP Billiton Iron Ore.**

**The Project has employed** significant numbers of Aboriginal specialists and trainees. It will continue to employ Aboriginal professionals extensively during Project development over the next 18 months.

A new generation of Aboriginal curators and multi-media artists is also being trained and mentored on the Project, the benefits of which will be experienced by participants and communities well beyond the Project's completion in 2009.





*This page:*  
Detail of painting by  
Patrick Tjungurrayi from  
Papunya Tula Artists.

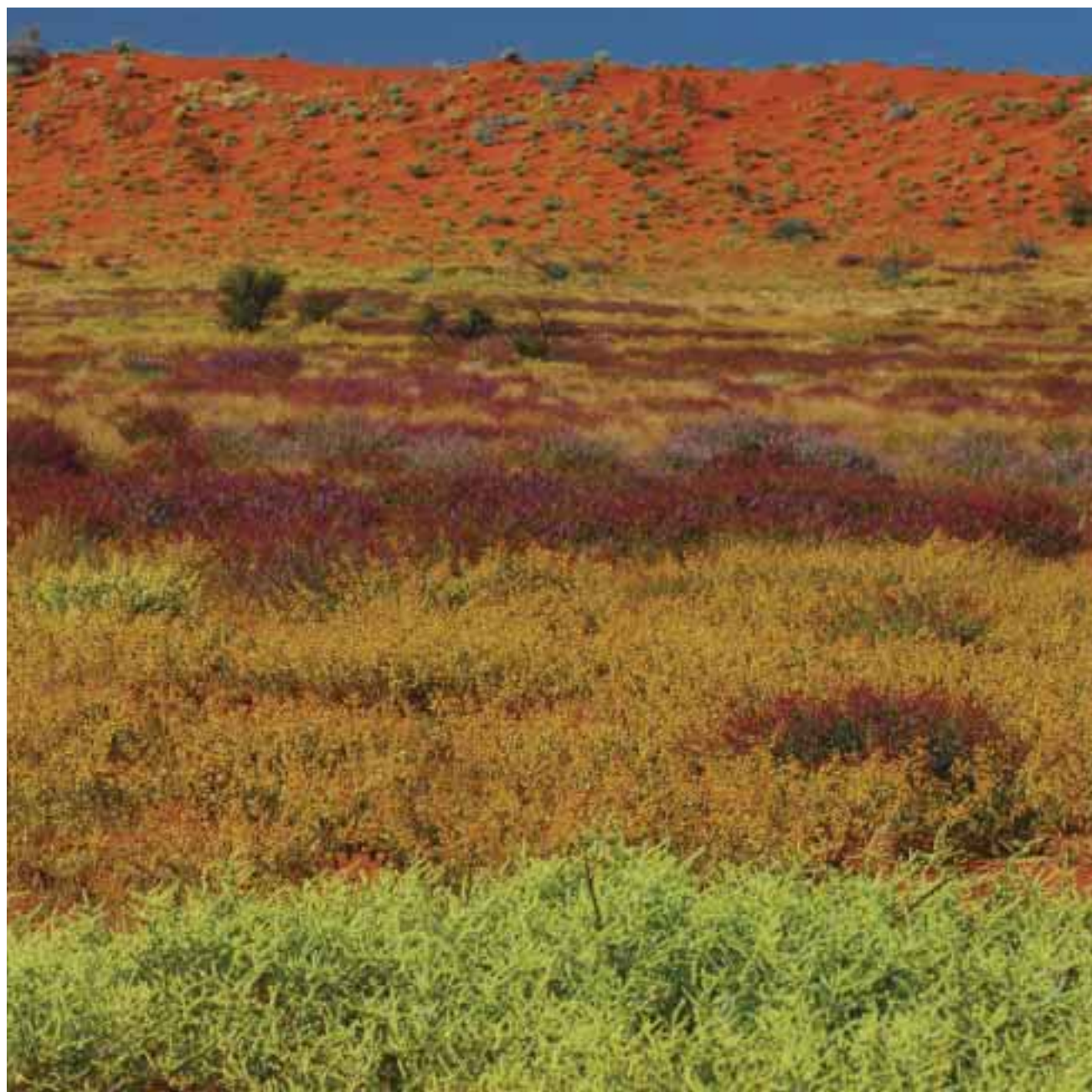
*Opposite page:*  
Wildflowers and sand  
dunes north of Well 23.

**The Canning Stock Route Project** allows a vital group of Aboriginal artists to share their way of experiencing and seeing Australian land and history with the rest of the world. Lotterywest is delighted to have been able to support the many participating Aboriginal people and their communities in adding their remarkable stories to this significant chapter in our heritage. We believe initiatives like this help to build community well-being, strengthen cultural identity and create a sense of belonging.

**Jan Stewart Chief Executive Officer Lotterywest**













*...I'm coming on this trip helping all the video and camera and audio crew for a bit of training. Before I [came] here, I used to look at painters [as] just killing time. You know, they're too old to play sports and maybe too old to get around, so they just sit down, all meet up together, doin' some dot paintings or however their technique is in painting.*



*...And on this trip I've realised that it's not just killing time. Even if it's not back on Country, they're telling their story. And one of the things that I've not seen before is when the whole community of artists get together and they do one big dot painting... That was quite amazing to see that come to life.*

**Kenneth KJ Martin, Kija, Multimedia Technician, Kimberley Language Resource Centre (edited extract).**



*...This is my father's Country  
and my grandfather's  
Country. That's what I'm  
painting. My Country.*

**Helicopter Tjungurrayi, Kukatja, Warlayirti Artists.**

*...I'd like to bring my kids through here and show them this part of the Country. Bring them down the Canning Stock Route with the knowledge that these old people that are sitting down here now can give me about different wells and different stories that I can pass on down to*



*my kids, so they might know  
a bit about the Aboriginal  
side, the traditional side...*

**Kenneth KJ Martin (edited extract).**









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**The Canning Stock Route Project** is evolving a model for ongoing art centre partnerships and enterprise – a touchstone for the artists involved – with benefits channeled directly back into communities. It is unfolding into:

- A world class exhibition of paintings, photography, 3-dimensional cultural artefacts and new media presentations;
- A major publication;
- Short films by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal filmmakers;

The Canning Stock Route Project has established a strong collaboration among nine Aboriginal arts centres, cultural organisations and their communities, which will help to build social capital in some of the most remote environments of Australia.

**Warlayirti Artists,** Balgo.

**Paraku IPA,** Mulan.

**Ngurra Artists,** Wangkajunga.

**Mangkaja Arts,** Fitzroy Crossing.

**Yulparija Artists,** Bidyadanga.

**Martumili Artists,** Newman.

**Papunya Tula Artists,** Kiwirrkurra.

**Kayili Artists,** Patjarr.

**Tjukurba Gallery,** Wiluna.











*Previous page (left):*  
The nine Aboriginal  
art centres involved in  
the Project circle the  
Canning Stock Route

*Previous page (right):*  
Friday Jones and  
granddaughter Niesha  
bogged at Lake  
Aerodrome, south of  
Well 12.

*Opposite page:*  
Friday Jones and  
Mervyn Street (right)  
talking maps.

*...What this Project is about  
is seeing how this one  
road has affected so many  
people in different ways...  
There's still an enormous  
amount of our shared  
history, black and white,  
that remains untold.*

**John Carty, Anthropologist.**





*...Looking at this map and I been thinking, "Where's the language boundary?" You got a track right there and where's the boundary for all the people? You go to a farm, they got electric fence. And that other farmer, neighbour, they can't jump*

*over another peoples'  
boundary. They got electric  
fence, keep that bloke one  
side. Martu boundaries got  
no electric fence, just tree....  
But looking at that map,  
[kartiya] got to recognise  
where all the language  
boundaries are.*

**Mervyn Street (edited extract).**







**Associated Artists:**

***Mangkaja Artists***

Nyuju Stumpy Brown  
Spider Snell  
Tommy May  
Jukuna Mona Chuguna  
Mary-Anne Downs  
Daisy Andrews  
Mervyn Street

***Warlayirti Artists***

Eubena Nampitjin  
Elizabeth Nyumi  
Helicopter Tjungurayi  
Jane Gimme

***Ngurra Artists***

Ned Cox  
Jewess James  
Rosie Goodjie  
Myapu Elsie Thomas  
George Tuckerbox  
Julia Lawford  
Butcher Wise

***Yulparija Artists***

Mary Meribida  
Donald Moko

***Paraku IPA***

Wendy Wise  
Bessie Doonday  
Bill Doonday  
Veronica (Fatima) Lulu  
Charmia Samuel  
Frank Gordon  
Minnie Pye  
Daisy Kanga  
Anna Johns  
Shirley Brown  
Lyn Manson

***Kayili Artists***

Nola Campbell  
Norma Giles  
Pulpurra Davies  
Jacky Giles

***Martumili Artists***

Morika Biljabu  
Hayley Atkins  
Kumbaya Girgiba  
Mulyatingki Marnay  
Jakayu Biljabu  
Dada Sampson  
Peter Tinker  
Jartarr Lilly Long  
Dulcie Gibbs  
Muni Rita Simpson  
Rosie Williams  
Yuwali Janice Nixon  
Yikartu Peterson

***Tjukurba Gallery***

Margaret Long  
Lena long  
Clifford Brooks  
Sharon Anderson  
Jennifer Lane  
Annette Williams  
Adena Williams  
Friday Jones  
Shiela Friday-Jones  
Vera Anderson

***Papunya Tula***

Patrick Tjungurrayi  
Miriam Napanangka  
Charlie Wallabi  
Josephine Nangala  
Richard Yukenbarri









**100 painted canvases** laid out on the sandy bank of Lake Stretch, held down by canned foods at the corners against the late afternoon breeze off the waters of the lake; this was the exhibition of the paintings made at the final painting camp of the five-week odyssey along the Canning Stock Route. It was the first opportunity for us – the curators – and for all those involved in the project, and in particular the artists themselves, to see the project taking tangible and lasting form.

Here were the first images of the Aboriginal perspective of the history of the CSR, the core of the exhibition. Art has often been the means by which the hidden history of Australia comes to light; the images of waterholes and wells, of ancestral creation and human experiences not recorded in books or official documents, but painted, as if onto the earth itself.

We imagined these canvases hanging on the walls of a gallery, sending their messages out to the public. The curatorial adventure had begun.

The scope of this exhibition is extensive, from the range and number of artists from nine communities, the variety of styles of painting, the approaches to the subject and the stories that were emerging, many for the first time in the public domain. This is an exhibition about the past, but with immediate relevance to the present.

**Wally Caruana, Guest Curator and Mentor.**

**I like working with histories and dreamtime stories.** Important to keep it going and let all the young generations know. Get good stories out of old people and keeping our culture strong at the same time, so young kids can take it on while old people pass on. I'm working at this job to be a role model here for the young mob in Newman to see that Aboriginal people can get a good job. Young people here are getting lost. Aboriginal people like to be shown by Aboriginal people. Not many people know about art and history. Only some people know. I've learnt about painting now and cultural stuff, its interesting when it's all true – real painting.

I like to learn about the long-time stories of great grandparents moving through the Country. Young people don't know where their family comes from. Some people know.

**Hayley Atkins, Martu, Martumili Artists, Emerging Curator.**







**The Canning Stock Route embodies** in many ways the modern history of the Western Desert people. It is a line on a map that crosses the Countries of many desert peoples. It is also the intercultural contact, conflict and cooperation those people experienced on the colonial frontier of the 20th Century. The Canning Stock Route is many things, but ultimately it is a constellation of lives disjointed by a common history and united by that same story.

But the epic scale of that story has never been told. Due to the diversity of language groups, separated by the geographic vastness of the deserts – from Balgo to Jigalong, Bidyadanga to Kunawarritji – the CSR is a story that has eluded anthropologists and historians. It has existed only as fragments, in archives, and around campfires. Through the pioneering vision of the CSR Project, these voices – in Martuwangka, Kukatja, Wangkajungka, and Walmajarri – return now from the edges of Western Desert, the edges of Australian ‘history’, to repopulate the stock route with the people it once carried away and the stories they took with them.

Many of the oral histories recorded are being documented for the first time. This alone has social and historical value beyond measure. Yet the unique value of the CSR Project is not in individual stories, just as it is not in individual artworks. The legacy of the Project is not one of filling the gaps or correcting the facts of CSR history; it is in a radical reorientation of how Australian histories can and must now be told. Brought together for the first time through an unparalleled program of intercultural research, exhibitions and publications, this chorus of desert voices speaks in unprecedented historical depth and richness, of that vaster sense of ‘story’ in which we are all implicated.

**John Carty, Anthropologist.**

**This Project celebrates** the centenary of the Canning Stock Route by powerfully acknowledging some of the countless Aboriginal voices and stories which make up the history of this region.

The many participants, agencies, organisations and partners on the Canning Stock Route Project are collaborating because they know there is no better time in Australian history to celebrate Western Australia's dynamic Aboriginal cultural forces.

One of the most compelling and energising aspects of this initiative is the remarkable team involved. The Project has developed into an empowered network, engaging outstanding individuals, young and old Aboriginal leaders, committed community enterprises and visionary partners. All recognise the critical need to record and understand the wealth of cultural knowledge belonging to traditional land owners.

Aimed at engaging and nurturing Aboriginal professionals, the Project acknowledges the need to build social capacity. Mapping and building from the inside out, the Project works with Aboriginal communities, enterprises and individuals within their own community environments and ensures processes of collaboration.

Over the next year and a half the Emerging Curators Training Program offers young Aboriginal curators the chance to travel from their communities to learn professional skills in some of Perth's key cultural institutions. This provides a window for emerging curators to assist FORM and the Western Australian Museum in building a world class show, as well as connecting them with other cultural leaders in the industry. Generating a ripple effect, the successful trainees are able to conduct exchanges with cultural organisations beyond the Project's development, guide the exhibition as it travels to global audiences, and transfer specialised knowledge and participation within community enterprises.

Utilising the creative sector as its platform, the Canning Stock Route Project crosses the boundaries of usual arts and cultural projects by combining multiple creative media with employment, enterprise and educational structures.

**Carly Davenport Acker, Project Manager, FORM**



**Enterprise thrives** in the remote deserts of Western Australia. Built on the cultural continuity and instinctive creativity of community artists and artisans, Aboriginal people have businesses with global reach.

Working in marginalised communities throughout the epic landscapes of outback Australia are art enterprises returning impressive economic, cultural and social benefits. Maximising the energy and inventiveness of their intercultural setting, art centres offer realistic self employment and small business opportunities in an environment with few choices. Backed by strong governance processes and recognition of the interdependency of culture and creativity, of community and enterprise, art centres enable Aboriginal people to participate equitably in the multimillion dollar world of the international art market.

The art centres of the Canning Stock Route Project are some of Australia's best; whether long established or newcomers, they build the capacity and confidence of individuals and the community through a culturally-appropriate and participatory business model. That art enterprises are among the only examples of successful, long term businesses in remote Aboriginal Australia authenticates their ability to adapt, support and celebrate the creativity of Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal Economic Development works with art enterprises throughout Western Australia. This recognises the genuine collaboration possible through artistic and economic partnerships with art centres and the unique contribution to Aboriginal livelihoods art centres make.

**Tim Acker, Aboriginal Economic Development, Department of Industry and Resources.**









*Opposite page:*  
Charlie Wallabi  
Tjungurrayi.

*This page:*  
Vera Anderson from  
Tjukurba Gallery with  
wildflowers at Weld  
Springs near Well 9.

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**The trip into Country** produced more than 100 paintings. Over the next year, more paintings, carvings and woven forms will emerge from the artists and communities of this alliance.

The Canning Stock Route Project manifests not only an invaluable legacy for Australia, but also represents a model for meaningful cultural and economic exchange in communities that will generate ongoing benefits for Aboriginal stakeholders and their enterprises.











**The Canning Stock Route Project** has been conceived and coordinated by Carly Davenport Acker of FORM, a cultural not-for-profit organisation based in Western Australia, and Tim Acker of Aboriginal Economic Development, in the Department of Industry and Resources, State Government of Western Australia.

The realisation of the Project is built on the collaboration of a large team of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal arts and cultural workers, curators, cultural advisors, anthropologists, language workers, film-makers and photographers, writers, fundraisers, administrators, support crew and volunteers.



Principal Partners:

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Supporting Partners:

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Arts and Cultural Centres:

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Project Initiator and Manager:

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building a state of creativity

*...It's an extraordinary  
journey...physically,  
emotionally, spiritually,  
mentally.*

**Tim Acker.**











**Photographers:**

*Tim Acker, Hayley Atkins, Morika Biljabu, Clifford Brooks, John Carty, Karen Dayman, Monique La Fontaine, Tom Lawford, Kenneth KJ Martin.*

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**Please note:**

The spelling of Aboriginal words and names varies. In this publication, these generally appear according to the conventions of accepted usage and authoritative sources.



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