

NGURRA

KUJU CANNING

WALYJA STOCK

ONE COUNTRY  
ONE PEOPLE

ROUTE  
PROJECT







Inside cover image:  
*Minyi Puru*, by Dulcie Gibbs, Rita Muni Simpson  
and Rosie Williams (Martumili Artists)

Compiled and edited by:  
Mags Webster

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FORM  
357 Murray Street, Perth  
Western Australia 6000  
T: +61 8 9226 2799

Lynda Dorrington  
Executive Director  
E: [lynda@form.net.au](mailto:lynda@form.net.au)  
W: [www.form.net.au](http://www.form.net.au)



A collaborative enterprise between FORM, BHP Billiton Iron Ore, the National Museum of Australia,  
and nine Aboriginal arts and cultural centres, leading to a major publication and exhibition in 2010.





## THE CANNING STOCK ROUTE PROJECT IS A COLLABORATION WHICH SHARES AND EXPLORES THE ART, CULTURE, HISTORIES AND CONNECTIONS OF THE PEOPLE, COUNTRY AND COMMUNITIES SURROUNDING THE CANNING STOCK ROUTE.

1. Annette Williams collecting purra, or bush tomato
2. Dulcie Gibbs, Rita Muni Simpson and Rosie Williams from Martumili Artists, painting their collaborative work, *Minyi Puru*
3. On the Canning Stock Route, north of Well 41
4. Patrick Olodoodi from Papunya Tula Artists, painting *Canning Stock Route Country (33-51)*
5. *Pukurti* (headdress) and shield made by Ned Cox, from Ngurra Artists
6. Friday Jones, from Tjukurba Gallery, Wiluna
7. *Tali* (sand dunes) in the Great Sandy Desert
8. Young boys, painted up for the Kurtal dance at the Ngumpan workshop
9. Emerging filmmaker, Kenneth KJ Martin working with Paul Elliot out bush
10. Paintings from Tjukurba Gallery artists, drying at Durba Springs
11. Dancers painted up for the *Majarrka* dance at the Ngumpan workshop
12. Emerging filmmaker, Morika Biljabu working with Nicole Ma out bush





‘...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, cultural liaison officer

\*this senior person passed away in late 2007

IMAGE: Nora Wompi, Bugai Whyllouter, Kumpaya Girgaba and Nora Nungabar (L-R), from Martumili Artists, on a bush trip to *Kun Kun*.





In development since late 2006, the Canning Stock Route Project is an alliance among nine remote Aboriginal art centres and cultural organisations.

Ninety-six artists and countrymen have contributed so far to the Project; and many Aboriginal people have been employed as cultural advisors, interpreters, photographers, language workers, writers, curators, filmmakers, mechanics, and health workers.

In addition to producing a nationally significant collection of art and cultural material, the Project is establishing a model for economic, social and cultural capacity building for remote-area Aboriginal people.

The Canning Stock Route Project is devised and managed by FORM, an independent cultural organisation based in Perth. In 2008, the National Museum of Australia joined the project as a collaborative partner to support production of a major exhibition and catalogue.

IMAGE: The Project's three emerging curators: Louise Mengil, Murungkurr Terry Murray and Hayley Atkins curating the Project collection





For the first time, through art, oral history and cultural material, the story of the Stock Route's impact, and the importance of the country around it, is being told by Aboriginal voices and interpreted through Aboriginal eyes.

Following almost a year of consultation and preparation, nearly 70 artists from the partner communities travelled up the Stock Route in July and August 2007 on a six-week return to Country. 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.

Over a hundred canvases were produced on that expedition. Since then, many more weeks of workshops and bush trips have added stories and artworks to the rich collection of material. This collection is now being curated and developed into a landmark exhibition, launching at the National Museum of Australia in 2010.

IMAGE: Curating the Project collection

‘Canning Stock Route parnatju ngurra wakarninpa.’

Eubena Nampitjin, Kukatja, Warlayirti Artists

‘...that’s what I’m painting, my Country, the Canning Stock Route.’



‘...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...’

Clifford Brooks, Martu, Tjukurba Gallery (edited extract), Wiluna

The Canning Stock Route was forged by Alfred Canning in 1906 as a means to transport cattle between Halls Creek in the Kimberley and Wiluna, nearly 2000km to the south. It has historical significance for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. The narrow dirt road runs approximately one third of the length of Western Australian desert, through the country of nine Aboriginal language groups.

For Aboriginal people the Stock Route also has numerous other cultural significances. These relate to the vast cosmologies which interlace across the desert, comprising a body of traditional Law which arises from the land and governs all aspects of Aboriginal life.

The nine language groups whose country intersects the Stock Route are represented by the arts and cultural organisations participating in the Project:

- Warlayirti Artists (Balgo)
- Pakaku Indigenous Protection Authority (Mulan)
- Ngurra Artists (Wangkajunga)
- Mangkaja Arts (Fitzroy Crossing)
- Yulparija Artists (Bidyadanga)
- Martumili Artists (Newman)
- Papunya Tula Artists (Alice Springs)
- Kayili Artists (Patjarr)
- Tjukurba Gallery (Wiluna)

- 1

MARTUMILI ARTISTS  
[Newman]
- 2

YULPARIJA ARTISTS  
[Bidyadanga]
- 3

MANGKAJA ARTISTS  
RESOURCE AGENCY  
[Fitzroy Crossing]
- 4

NGURRA ARTISTS  
[Wangkajunga]
- 5

PARUKU INDIGENOUS  
PROTECTED AREA  
[Mulan]
- 6

WARLAYIRTI ARTISTS  
[Balgo]
- 7

PAPUNYA TULA ARTISTS  
[Alice Springs]
- 8

KAYILI ARTISTS  
[Patjarr]
- 9

TJUKURBA GALLERY  
[Wiluna]







**WARLAYIRTI ARTISTS**  
[Balgo]

Helicopter Tjungurrayi  
Elizabeth Nyumi  
Eubena Nampitjin  
Jane Gimme  
Anne Nowee  
Lucy Loomoo  
Christine Yukenbarri  
Brandy Tjungurrayi



**MARTUMILI ARTISTS**  
[Newman]

Pukarlyi (Milly Kelly)  
Dada Samson  
Dulcie Gibbs  
Muni Rita Simpson  
Mantararr Rosie Williams  
Jakayu Biljabu  
Jartarr Lilly Long  
Hayley Atkins  
June Wilberforce  
Nora Wompi  
Nancy Chapman  
Bugai Whylouter  
Mulyatingki Marney  
Nola Taylor  
Elizabeth Kadibil



**PAPUNYA TULA ARTISTS**  
[Alice Springs]

Patrick Olodoodi  
Miriam Olodoodi  
Richard Yukenbarri  
Josephine Nangala  
Charlie Wallabi



**KAYILI ARTISTS**  
[Patjarr]

Pulpurru Davies  
Nola Campbell  
Norma Giles  
Jacky Giles



**YULPARIJA ARTISTS**  
[Bidyadanga]

Donald Moko  
Jan Billycan  
Mary Meribida  
Harry Bullen  
Wajirri Tiepin Forrest  
Pampirla Hansen Boxer

**Ngurra**  
artists

**NGURRA ARTISTS**  
[Wangkajunga]

Mayapu Elsie Thomas  
Rosie Goodjie  
Tom Lawford  
Mayarn Julia Lawford  
Nada Rawlins  
Jukuja Nora Tjookootja  
Ned Cox  
Milkujung Jewess James  
George Tuckerbox  
Butcher Wise



**PARUKU INDIGENOUS  
PROTECTED AREA**  
[Mulan]

Veronica Lulu  
Chamia Samuels  
Anna Johns  
Shirley Brown  
Bill Doonday  
Wendy Wise  
Bessie Doonday  
Lyn Manson  
Daisy Kanga  
Frank Gordon  
Kumanjayi Pye



**MANGKAJA ARTISTS  
RESOURCE AGENCY**  
[Fitzroy Crossing]

Ngarralja Tommy May  
Jukuja Dolly Snell  
Mervyn Street  
Wakartu Cory Surprise  
Ngilpirr Spider Snell  
Taku Rosie Taco  
Penny K-Lyons  
Nyuju Stumpy Brown  
Manmarr Daisy Andrews  
Jukuna Mona Chuguna  
Kumanjayi Skipper



**TJUKURBA GALLERY**  
[Wiluna]

Clifford Brooks  
Annette Williams  
Georgina Brown  
Vera Anderson  
Sheila Friday Jones  
Friday Jones  
Kay Bingham  
Billy Patch  
Georey Stewart  
Dusty Stephens  
Sunshine Williams  
Margaret Long  
Lena Long

IMAGE: Tjukurba Gallery artists and some Canning Stock Route Project staff at Well 22



Late in 2008, the National Museum of Australia acquired the Project collection. As the country's premier national collecting institution, with a specific legislative responsibility to document the histories of Indigenous Australia, the Museum is committed to maintaining the collection as a coherent entity in perpetuity.

The National Museum, a principal partner of the Project, explores the land, nation and peoples of Australia. It celebrates Australian history in a unique way by revealing the stories of ordinary and extraordinary Australians, promoting the exploration of knowledge and ideas and providing a dynamic forum for discussion and reflection.

**'The rare combination of collection and extensive and full documentation makes it a nationally significant collection, representing an important contemporary narrative of the intricacies and richness of Australian Aboriginal cultures and histories.'**

Craddock Morton, Director, National Museum of Australia

In July 2010, the National Museum will host the launch of the Canning Stock Route Project exhibition in Canberra, and manage its subsequent tour to selected national venues. In the meantime, the Museum is working in partnership with FORM and the nine Aboriginal arts and cultural organisations in constructing the exhibition, and preparing the content to share with the nation.



**'THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA REGARDS THIS COLLECTION AS ONE OF TRULY NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE, PROVIDING A UNIQUE ARCHIVE OF INDIGENOUS SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORIES. IT IS AN IMPORTANT ADDITION TO THE NATION'S HERITAGE AND HISTORY COLLECTIONS.'**

Craddock Morton, Director, National Museum of Australia

IMAGE: Patrick Olodoodi naming the water holes on his painting, *Canning Stock Route Country* (33-51)





# 'NGURRA KUJU WALYJA! CANBERRA: UP IN LIGHTS!'

Charlie Wallabi Tjungurrayi, pictured left.





‘I’m not just a curator but a community member as well and as my family mob know – I’m always trying to pull my community forward.’

Louise Mengil, emerging curator

‘At the end of all I have achieved I would like to pass my knowledge to younger Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who would like to be a part of the media world’.

Clint Dixon, emerging filmmaker

‘When you paint a story of your life, family, history and culture you become part of it.’

Hayley Atkins, emerging curator

A new generation of Aboriginal curators, filmmakers and photographers is being trained and mentored by the Project. Emerging curators Hayley Atkins (based in Jigalong), Louise Mengil (Kununurra) and Murungkurr Terry Murray (Fitzroy Crossing) have been involved with the Project since mid-2007. Supported and mentored by the Project team, they are helping to guide the exhibition content and development.

Emerging filmmakers/photographers Clint Dixon (Broome), Kenneth ‘KJ’ Martin (Halls Creek) and Morika Biljabu (Punmu) all completed short films on the 2007 return to Country trip, and since then, under the mentorship of award-winning filmmaker Nicole Ma, have been recording artistic workshops and the exhibition development process in stills and film.

These emerging professional are learning skills and making relationships which will benefit them and their communities well beyond the Project’s completion. In addition, as remote-area individuals, they bring an understanding and quality of cultural knowledge to the Project which, if emulated and developed in similar programs, can influence the future success of Indigenous art in terms of how it is presented to the world.

IMAGE: Hayley Atkins, one of the Project’s emerging curators

‘Remote community professionals bring a unique worldview to us... I think this worldview is ultimately what the soul of the Project is about.’

Nicole Ma, filmmaker and mentor





‘AS THE PROJECT’S EMERGING CURATOR I’M ONE OF THREE YOUNG PROFESSIONALS LEARNING ABOUT THE ABORIGINAL ARTS INDUSTRY... I GET TO HELP TELL THE STORY OF THE CANNING STOCK ROUTE WHICH TELLS THE HISTORY FROM AN ABORIGINAL WORLD VIEW. OUR JOB IS TO TELL THE STORY OF THE NINE ART CENTRES INVOLVED AND ALL THEIR ARTISTS AND MAKE SURE ALL THE PIECES OF THE PROJECT FIT TOGETHER, SO THAT THERE ARE NO MISSING PIECES FOR OUR HISTORY. IMPORTANTLY, MY ROLE IS TO ENABLE AUDIENCES TO OUR EXHIBITION TO LEARN ABOUT WHO ALL THESE ARTISTS ARE TODAY.’

Louise Mengil, emerging curator

IMAGE: Kids from Kunawarritji Community celebrating the painting, *Kun Kun*



PRINCIPAL PARTNER  
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA

The National Museum of Australia is delighted to join FORM as a partner in the Canning Stock Route Project. The Museum considers the project to be a nationally important endeavour with enduring meaning and significance for all Australians.

The National Museum’s acquisition of the collection is proof of its long-term commitment to the project, and more broadly to working with regional Indigenous communities across the country. The collection stands as a peerless archive of the social and cultural histories of communities across a vast area of Western Australia. While the dynamic aesthetics of the artworks themselves are compelling enough to warrant acquisition by the Museum, it is the exhaustive written and audio-visual records of the artists, the regions and their histories that give it great value. This is not simply an art collection, but an extensive artefactual and documentary assembly of Indigenous histories that might otherwise be unknown or ignored.

A key strength of the Museum is its formal commitment to detailing the histories of Indigenous Australia through objects, images, films and texts. This commitment ensures that the full potential of collections such as these are recognised, explored, and communicated. The Museum believes that this collection must be preserved as a coherent whole, and be available for research, exhibition and display, in perpetuity. It also considers that the artists and art centres from which these works originate are bound to the collection forever.

Throughout its programs, the Museum is committed to developing and maintaining long-term relationships of value with Indigenous communities across Australia. We see the Canning Stock Route Project as a model for projects of this kind, and we look forward to working with FORM and the communities involved to make an exhibition of great quality and to preserve the collection for the future.

Craddock Morton, Director, National Museum of Australia

IMAGE: Elizabeth Nyumi, from Warlaryirti Artists, starting a painting







PRINCIPAL PARTNER  
BHP BILLITON IRON ORE

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

Over the past four 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 Canning Stock Route 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 Project's other major partners, the Indigenous Land Corporation, Lotterywest and the National Museum of Australia in this Project that promises to leave lasting benefits for the many participants, as well as the wider West 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 and Community Relations, BHP Billiton Iron Ore

IMAGE: Kumpaya Girgaba, from Martumili Artists, sharing the story for the painting, *Kun Kun*





PRINCIPAL PARTNER  
LOTTERYWEST

The Canning Stock Route Project allows a vital group of Aboriginal artists to share with the rest of the world their way of experiencing and seeing Australian land and history. Lotterywest is delighted to have been able to support the many participating Aboriginal people and their communities in sharing their remarkable stories of 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

IMAGE: *Kukurrmarlu*, by Myapu Elsie Thomas, from Ngurra Artists

‘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



‘...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 BILILUNA 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

‘...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 (edited extract), Wiluna

‘...THIS IS MY FATHER’S COUNTRY AND MY GRANDFATHER’S COUNTRY. THAT’S WHAT I’M PAINTING. MY COUNTRY.’

Helicopter Tjungurrayi, Kukatja, Warlayirti Artists

‘...TO TELL OUR STORY TO THE WORLD, WE DO IT BY PAINTING.’

Clifford Brooks, Martu, Tjukurba Gallery (edited extract), Wiluna

‘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...’

Tommy May, Wangkajunga, Mangkaja Artists (edited extract) Fitzroy Crossing



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PRINCIPAL PARTNER  
INDIGENOUS LAND CORPORATION

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 Australians 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 Project, 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.

Alan Padgett, Manager, Indigenous Land Corporation,  
Western Division

IMAGE: The Project's emerging photographer, Morika Biljabu

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The Canning Stock Route Project harnesses and acknowledges some of the important voices of the first Australians from across the western desert. The dynamic, combined force of contemporary Aboriginal art, new media, and rich stories conveys our shared history and the vitality of life in remote and regional communities today in a new light.

The many participants, agencies, organisations and partners on the Canning Stock Route Project are collaborating because they recognise there is no better time in Australian history than now, particularly post 2008's National Apology, to celebrate Western Australia's vibrant 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 and economic capacity. The Project has been working with Aboriginal enterprises and individuals in-country and within their own community environments, ensuring collaboration. Since mid 2007, the training program for emerging curators, filmmakers and photographers has offered young Aboriginal creative practitioners the chance to travel from their communities to learn new skills in key cultural

institutions in Perth and Canberra. This establishes a platform for a new generation of professionals to assist FORM and the National Museum of Australia in building a world class show, as well as connecting them with leaders in other industries. 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 national audiences, and transfer specialised knowledge and participation within their own community enterprises.

The Canning Stock Route Project crosses the boundaries of typical arts and cultural projects by combining multiple creative mediums with employment, enterprise and educational structures.

Carly Davenport Acker,  
Canning Stock Route Project Manager, FORM

IMAGE: Friday Jones and Mervyn Street (R-L), travelling the Stock Route





CANNING STOCK ROUTE PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- Record and share the vibrancy of desert life, desert culture and desert families
- Explore the complex, interdependent and intertwined histories of people associated to the Canning Stock Route
- Connect Aboriginal creativity and art with new audiences, in new contexts
- Enhance the skills of Indigenous professionals over a range of vocational areas
- Support the independence and growth of remote area enterprises
- Create new pathways for collaboration between remote/urban and Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal Australians
- Develop innovative platforms to progress remote and regional arts and cultural talents to global audiences

IMAGE: Rosie Williams and Dulcie Gibbs (R-L) at work on their painting, *Minyi Puru* (Martumili Artists)





The Canning Stock Route Project has been conceived and coordinated by FORM, through a team led by Carly Davenport Acker.

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, filmmakers and photographers, writers, fundraisers, administrators, support crew and volunteers.

## PROJECT INITIATOR AND MANAGER

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## PRINCIPAL PARTNERS



## SUPPORTING PARTNERS



**AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT**

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Department of  
**Culture and  
the Arts**



Department of Local Government  
and Regional Development  
Government of Western Australia



Government of Western Australia  
Department of Commerce  
Aboriginal Economic Development



Department of Water  
Government of Western Australia

## ARTS AND CULTURAL CENTRES



Ngurra  
artists



Photographs by:

Morika Biljabu, Ross Swanborough and Tim Acker.

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Warning:

It is customary in many Aboriginal communities not to mention the name or reproduce photographs of the deceased. All such mentions and photographs in this publication have been produced with the permission of the appropriate communities and family members. However, care and discretion should be exercised in using this book within Aboriginal communities.

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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NATIONAL  
MUSEUM OF  
AUSTRALIA  
CANBERRA