

Reception to Launch *Yalangbara: Art of the Djang'kawu*  
SPEECH by His Honour Mr Tom Pauling AO QC  
Administrator of the Northern Territory  
Government House – 12 March 2009

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Welcome to Government House. I acknowledge the Larrakia people and their ancestors, traditional owners of the land on which this house stands.

I would like to thank Margie West, Emeritus Curator of Aboriginal Art, for inviting me to launch this very special publication, *Yalangbara: Art of the Djang'kawu*, at Government House.

Many Rirratjingu persons know that I knew Roy Marika very well, beginning with the Gove Land Rights case in 1970. He was, in fact, the first Aboriginal person with whom I held a deep discussion, the first of many.

The forthcoming re-enactment of part of the Djang'kawu dance cycle, usually performed as part of a narra ceremony, underlines the spiritual significance of this event today.

The last time Government House had the pleasure of sharing traditional dance was in June 2006 when the ceremonial ironwood poles, specially commissioned for the gardens, were danced into life by ten Tiwi dancers. The poles are dedicated to the Aboriginal staff that have worked at Government House. They are all remembered in our history and are a continuing and honoured presence here.

Government House has also witnessed investitures of members of the Marika family. In recognising their contributions to the Northern Territory, I do not think that we were fully aware of their significance in the history of this land.

Yalangbara is the place of the first people. In the beginning it was named by the three powerful supernatural beings, a brother and two sisters, collectively known as *the Djang'kawu*. It is a sacred site and the area of some 210 square

kilometres of land and coastal waters is listed on the Commonwealth Government's Register of the National Estate.

This, the first Indigenous art publication to focus upon one significant ancestral site, provides an incredibly valuable insight into the significance of place, culture, painting. It celebrates the lives of, and helps us to understand the responsibilities of, leaders of the Rirratjingu clan and Dhuwa moiety. Readers can learn the history, appreciate the importance of the culture and, in turning these pages, can create their own relationships with the ceremonies, patterns and sites through the superb photography and descriptions.

As the artist of the bark painting *Djang'kawu Story (The Sun Rising)* explained: *Painting is very important. It's the design or symbol, power of the land.* In *Yalangbara: Art of the Djang'kawu*, we "meet" three generations of artists through their comprehensive biographies and we become timeless companions in their journey.

I congratulate all who have worked on this magnificent production, especially the family members. I thank you for sharing your artwork and related stories and hope that in the future many visitors to northeast Arnhemland - academics, mining representatives, art enthusiasts and tourists will read this book and increase their understanding.

My appreciation also goes to consultant anthropologist Dr Geoffrey Bagshaw; prominent writer and art consultant Jennifer Isaacs; Professor Howard Morphy, Director of the Research School of Humanities, Australian National University; Dr John Stanton, Director of the Berndt Museum of Anthropology; and of course Margie West, Emeritus Curator of Aboriginal Art at our Museum and Art Gallery. I very much look forward to the exhibition scheduled for 2010.

Thank you all. This book is a treasure.