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Redfern local artist shortlisted in Silver Jubilee Telstra Art Award

Redfern's Gordon Syron is one of over 100 entrants to be short listed in this year's prestigious 25th *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award*.

Gordon's painting *Guilty, Your Honour* depicts an Aboriginal man in chains with a Red Coat Guard and a figure which seems part-judge and part-executioner. It is part of a series which explores the many facets of injustice and judgement of Aboriginal people. From the extermination of Indigenous people in the early days of settlement, through the many ways in which white society pre-judges by colour, and into the ongoing issue of Aboriginal deaths in custody. Gordon's paintings tackle the imbalance of society and frankly portray the treatment and bias experienced by black people in Australia over the past two centuries.

Gordon, who moved to Redfern in the past year, grew up on a dairy farm in the Forster-Tuncurry area on the NSW Central Coast and his family were from the Worimi-Biripi people. The 66 year old has been painting for more than 30 years, beginning when he spent time in prison as a young man. He still visits jails to talk with young, Indigenous offenders to help them get their life in order and encourage them to paint.

Gordon believes the Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award plays a significant role in bringing Indigenous culture to the forefront.

"I think the Award shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island culture is becoming more respected and that what Indigenous people contribute to Australian society is more appreciated," said Gordon.

Museum and Art Gallery (MAGNT) Acting Director, Apolline Kohen said the great diversity of Indigenous expression is reflected in the artworks submitted this year which range from 2D works on paper, bark and canvas to 3D works made from fibre, ironwood and fibreglass.

"The quality of the art works we have received for this year's Silver Jubilee is outstanding, and there is no doubt the judges will have a difficult time selecting the winners," Ms Kohen said.

Lawrie Mortimer, General Manager of the Telstra's Indigenous Directorate, said the Telstra Art Award provides incredible exposure for Indigenous artists from all around Australia.

"Telstra's support of this Award helps ensure the continued development of Indigenous art in Australia by identifying and recognising the country's most talented artists, no matter where they live," Mr Mortimer said.

The overall \$40,000 Telstra Award and further four media categories will again be non-acquisitive in 2008, which means the winning artists can retain or sell their works.

"We're expecting many of the works to be in great demand following the announcement of this year's winners," Ms Kohen said.

"Last year, over two thirds of finalists sold their works for a combined total of more than \$850,000."

Winners in the Telstra Art Award will be announced on Friday 15 August at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, and works will be on display until Sunday 26 October 2008.

The Telstra Art Award is open to all adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and aims to showcase the very best Australian Indigenous art from around the country.

For further information contact:

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Media note: To speak to Telstra Art Award finalists call Melanie Neilson on 0400 599 463.

The 25th *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award* is supported by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments.



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