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## **Dutton Park artist shortlisted in Silver Jubilee Telstra Art Award**

Dutton Park's Laurie Nilsen is one of over 100 entrants to be short listed in this year's prestigious 25<sup>th</sup> *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award*.

The short listing follows Laurie being awarded the Wandjuk Marika Three-Dimensional Memorial Award in the 24<sup>th</sup> *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award* for his work *Goolburris on the Bungil Creek*.

This year, Laurie has submitted a work titled *Optical Pollution*. The piece is a departure from the graphic, illustrative work that Laurie has been producing recently and a move back to working in bright paint.

The painting is a 'family portrait' of emus, as Laurie came to notice individual characteristics in each animal. The large size of the painting enables Laurie to include reflections in the emu's eyes to display different stories and issues.

"I wanted to make sure my paintings were not just 'pretty pictures'. I'm using the eye of the emu as a vehicle, as they say it's the window to your soul," said Laurie.

Born in 1954, Laurie is a respected Brisbane based artist whose work is centrally concerned with the environment and the politics of Aboriginality. He grew up around Roma in Western Queensland and has been an artist "on and off" since he was about 14 years old, and has considered himself a serious artist for the past 15 years.

Laurie has exhibited both nationally and internationally and his work is represented in the collection of the National Gallery of Australia. Much of his art deals with Aboriginal culture and stories about his people - often drifting into political or environmental issues. His natural bush skills have had a comfortable translation into sculpture and installation works, working with timber, metal, found objects and barbed wire.

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 0400 599 463

The 25<sup>th</sup> *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.