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Torres Strait Island artists shortlisted in Silver Jubilee Telstra Art Award

Torres Strait Islands artists Alick Tipoti and George Nona are among more than 100 entrants to be short listed in this year's prestigious 25th *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award*.

Alick's work is a 1190 millimetre by 497 millimetre hand-coloured, delicate and complex linocut. Alick has been given the traditional name of Zugub, which enables him to relate to the spirits of his ancestors, the Zugubal. Alick uses this connection with the spirits to guide him as to the design of his linocuts.

"When I work late at night carving traditional designs, I can sense the presence of the spirits who I verbally acknowledge and thank in language for their guidance and help in visualising the words they have given me," said Alick.

"I vividly remember an unusual event late one evening when I was guided to re-sketch and change the interpretation of a block I was about to carve.

"This was just one of the many occasions when I have connected with the spirits," he continued.

Alick's work has been exhibited extensively throughout Australia and internationally and he is a former winner of the 2003 and 2007 Works on Paper category in the *Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award*.

George Nona's entry is a headdress named *Koewbuw Dhoeri*. The *Dhoeri* is from the Maluiligal Nation, the western cluster of Torres Strait Islands and predominantly from Badu and Mabuig Islands. *Dhoeri* are made from bird feathers and were traditionally worn during tribal war, they indicated that death was close by but in present day are worn only by dancers at ceremonial occasions.

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

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