



Marion Scrymgour
MINISTER FOR ARTS AND MUSEUMS

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Huge Crocodile Set to Feature at Telstra Art Awards

A 650kg bronze crocodile is set to be one of the key attractions at this year's 24th *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award*, Arts and Museums Minister Marion Scrymgour said today.

Ms Scrymgour said the crocodile and 103 other pre-selected works will be on display from 10 August to 18 November 2007 as part of this year's Award.

"This year's 24th *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award* is set to contain several highlights and I am sure this crocodile will be a favourite among the thousands of people viewing this year's exhibition," Ms Scrymgour said.

"Crocodiles are a much-loved icon of the Northern Territory and hold a special place in Indigenous culture throughout much of Australia.

"This impressive crocodile was designed by well known Torres Strait Islander artist Dennis Nona, who has been a finalist on seven previous occasions.

"While *Sweetheart* is very popular among the thousands of people who visit MAGNT each year, I am sure this crocodile will be loved and admired just as much."

Mr Nona, who has been named by *Australian Art Collector* magazine as one of Australia's 50 most collectable artists for 2007, is well known for his linocuts and sculptures.

In his artist statement, Mr Nona states that the story behind his entry into this year's Telstra Award, called *Ubirikuburi*, was that of a legend that took place on the Mai Kusa (River) on the western coast of Papua New Guinea.

A widower gave his daughter a crocodile as a pet that was well looked after and kept in a pen until it reached its full size.

But the crocodile killed the widower after being left without food for a long time.

The moral of the story instructs people that if animals are taken from their natural environment they must be properly treated and cared for.

Mr Nona's work is one of 26 vying for the \$4000 prize for best 3D work, with 49 entries in the general painting category, 16 works on paper and 13 barks also competing for \$4000 in their respective categories.

The \$40,000 Telstra Award for the overall winner is non-acquisitive.

“While Mr Nona is a regular finalist, the 24th *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award* has again attracted new and emerging artists including local Joshua Bonson who is a first time entrant and finalist,” Ms Scrymgour said.

“The Telstra Art Award is not simply about competition but more so the celebration of Indigenous Australian art and culture.”

