



## Tjanpi Dogs Set To Be Popular at Telstra Art Award

Woven camp dogs are set to be a popular attraction at this year's 24<sup>th</sup> *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award*, to be held at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) from 10 August 2007.

MAGNT director Anna Malgorzewicz said *Tjanpi Papa Uwankara (Big Mob of Tjanpi Dogs)* is associated with the same organisation that supported the creation of *Tjanpi Toyota*, which won the \$40,000 first prize at the 22<sup>nd</sup> *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award*.

"Tjanpi Desert Weavers is the dynamic arts employment program of the NPY (Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara) Women's Council in Central Australia that has been involved in the creation of this year's unique entry," Ms Malgorzewicz said.

"I am sure *Big Mob of Tjanpi Dogs* will bring smiles to the faces of many visitors to this year's 24<sup>th</sup> *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award*.

"Much like the *Tjanpi Toyota* from 2005, it is obvious a lot of work has gone into this entry and that fibre art is an important part of the lives of the women who have created the dogs."

Tjanpi (meaning grass) began as a series of basket-weaving workshops initiated by the NPY Women's Council on Ngaanyatjarra Lands in 1995.

Women wanted meaningful employment in their homelands, to be able to provide for their families. Building on traditional weaving practice, new-found weaving skills were shared with relations on neighbouring communities, and weaving spread.

Today, more than 400 women across 28 communities are making baskets and sculptures out of desert grass and other materials, and working with fibre in this way is now firmly embedded in Western and Central Desert culture.

*Big Mob of Tjanpi Dogs* was made by 22 women from seven different communities across the Ngaanyatjarra and Pitjantjatjara lands during the past year and is being installed at MAGNT in preparation for the Telstra Art Award's opening night in Darwin on 10 August.

Large families of dogs and their antics are an all pervading presence on communities. They are greatly valued companions and they act as gatekeepers to people's homes.

Living 'bush way', a good hunting dog was highly prized and still is.

Dogs both fierce and friendly are an integral part of Anangu life and have a lead role in many Tjukurrpa stories from the NPY Lands.

The *Award* was founded by MAGNT in 1984, and remains the nation's longest-running *Award* dedicated to Indigenous artists. The Telstra Award attracts a \$40,000 prize and the four media category prizes attract an additional \$4,000 each.

The *Award* is non-acquisitive, meaning MAGNT will not automatically acquire winning entries. Last year, Ngoia Napaltjarri Pollard won the *Telstra Award* with her artwork *Swamps West of Nyirripi*. This piece later sold for \$21 960.

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

"Last year, 25 finalists sold their works for a combined total of more than \$250 000."

Lawrie Mortimer, General Manager of the Telstra National Indigenous Directorate, said the *Telstra Award* provides incredible exposure for Indigenous artists from across Australia who in many cases, come from remote and isolated communities.

"Telstra's support for 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," he said.

The *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.

The 24<sup>th</sup> *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award* exhibition opens and *Award* presentations will be made on Friday 10 August 2007. The exhibition will be on display until Sunday 18 November 2007.

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