

INDIGENOUS ART EXHIBITION ***‘CANNABIS: IT’S NOT OUR CULTURE’***

-Embargoed until 11 am Tuesday 30th March 2010 -

An Indigenous art exhibition, to be held on Tuesday 30th March 2010 at 11 am – 12.30 pm at *CarriageWorks* in Sydney, will launch the National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre’s (NCPIC) Indigenous project, *‘Cannabis: It’s not our culture’*. The project entails a dedicated website: www.notourculture.org.au, the one-day exhibition, and development of resources for Indigenous healthcare workers. The exhibition and website feature original artworks on canvas, lino print and a slumped glass and timber sculpture created by seven urban and remote Indigenous communities across Australia. The exhibition, to be opened by the Hon Carmel Tebbutt - Deputy Premier of NSW and Minister for Health, and hosted by Ms Karla Grant of SBS’s *‘Living Black’*, aims to showcase community-led, solution-based approaches to tackling cannabis-related issues in the following communities: Kintore (NT), Lockhart River (QLD), Thursday Island (QLD), Jubullum (NSW), Nowra (NSW), Griffith (NSW) and Geelong (VIC). Artists range from women in central Australia, to art cooperatives in Geelong, to a budding young artist and former student of Thursday Island high school.

The project, funded by the Australian Government, was informed by the concerning discrepancy in cannabis use trends between the general Australian population and Indigenous communities, where cannabis use in the last 12 months is more than double that of the general population. While cannabis use among the general population in Australia has been declining over the past decade, the most recent National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (2004-05) reported that 23% of non-remote Indigenous persons aged over 17 years reported using cannabis in the previous 12 months. This is compared with just 11% of the general Australian population aged fourteen years and over having used cannabis in the same time period as reported in the 2004 National Drug Household Survey. In addition, studies conducted by Associate Professor Alan Clough and colleagues in 2005-06 in three remote Indigenous communities in the 'Top End' of the Northern Territory, indicated that 61% of males and 58% of females between 13-36 years used cannabis at least weekly. The majority of these users (88%) reported symptoms of cannabis dependence. While Clough and colleagues’ results are not necessarily representative of cannabis use rates by all Indigenous Australians, they still provide a concerning insight into cannabis use rates for some communities.

NCPIC, based at the University of New South Wales and funded by the Australian Government, has made working with Indigenous communities a priority over the past 12 months and has

produced as part of the project, a series of Indigenous-specific factsheets for health care workers, free posters of a selection of the artworks for distribution to community centres and Indigenous organisations and a website, which features the artworks, accompanying explanatory stories and the suite of factsheets for download. A small grants scheme has also been launched to enable the Indigenous communities involved in the project to take ownership of and drive solutions to cannabis-related issues in their communities. A national Indigenous Music Competition is also open to all Indigenous Australians and complements the project's aims of community-led approaches to the issues caused by cannabis use.

Cannabis Information and Helpline – 1800 30 40 50
NCPIC website – www.ncpic.org.au

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Contact details for images of artwork and information:

Paul Dillon, tel. (02) 9385 0226 or 0419 402 099, email p.dillon@unsw.edu.au

Marion Downey, tel. (02) 9385 0180 or 0401 713 850, email m.downey@unsw.edu.au

Clare Chenoweth, tel. (02) 9385 0218 or 0401 718 548, email c.chenoweth@unsw.edu.au

Date Issued: 29th March, 2010.

Exhibition: Tuesday 30th March, 11am-12.30pm, Bay 20 – *CarriageWorks*, 245 Wilson St
Eveleigh, Sydney, NSW 2015.

Artists: Pelita Michaels Napurrula, Clara Napurrula, Ruby-Lee Napurrula & Josephine Napurrula

Community: Kintore, NT

Title: 'Ngurra Palya Kanyintjaku' – 'Looking after our Home'

