



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **the Premier and Cabinet**

Minister for Culture and the Arts

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Media Statement

2009 Western Australian Indigenous Art Awards winners announced.

Australia's richest indigenous contemporary art award winners were announced by Culture and the Arts Minister John Day at an awards ceremony held at the Art Gallery of Western Australia this evening.

Mr Day presented the \$50,000 Western Australian Indigenous Art Award to Ricardo Idagi.

Wakartu Cory Surprise was named winner of the \$10,000 Western Australian Indigenous Artist Award, which was accepted on her behalf by André Porigneaux from the Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency in Fitzroy Crossing.

The Minister congratulated the two winners and said the awards exhibition was a superb showcase of outstanding works by indigenous artists from across the nation, with work exhibited in a range of media including sculpture, painting and photography.

The exhibition features works by 15 artists and an artists' group shortlisted from a field of 213 nominations - a significant increase on the 157 nominations submitted for the inaugural awards last year.

"The Western Australian Indigenous Art Awards exhibition provides a wonderful opportunity to bring national artists to this State, celebrate WA artists nationally, and to enrich WA audiences with the finest indigenous art in this country," Mr Day said.

"Ricardo Idagi, from Murray Island, Torres Strait, Queensland, was awarded the Western Australian Indigenous Art Award for his superb craftsmanship and truth to materials. Mr Idagi's exceptional body of work expresses his profound honouring of ancestors and his commitment to culture.

"The Western Australian Artist Award was presented to Wakartu Cory Surprise, from Fitzroy Crossing for her intuitive use of colour and free gesture which reveals an affinity to her country. These daring and vital works astonished the judges."

The Minister also presented Certificates of High Commendation for the two award categories. Lorraine Connelly-Northey, of Swan Hill, Victoria, was the awarded her certificate under the top category, the Western Australian Indigenous Art Award. Christopher Pease of Perth was awarded his certificate under the Western Australian Artist Award category.

The People's Choice Award of \$5,000 will be selected by visitor ballots during the exhibition.

Mr Day also announced that the WA Indigenous Art Awards would now form part of a new focus for the State's support of indigenous arts.

"This Liberal-National Government is committed to building the capacity of indigenous communities and indigenous people to produce unique works of art," he said.

"We will expand our current support for indigenous visual arts development in this State, with the awards being the cornerstone of this initiative."

The awards will be held next year and then held biennially subsequent to 2010.

"Three consecutive years for the awards allows them to become established. Holding it every two years from 2010 will help in the longer term to maintain high quality entries from a broader field of artists. We are striving for quality art rather than quantity," Mr Day said.

"Resources will then be directed towards devising a more supportive environment for the development of indigenous visual arts so that there are more opportunities for new and upcoming artists to build their skills to a more professional level.

"By moving away from being just about an award, this Government is establishing a sound platform for indigenous art.

"There is no change to the budget allocation. We are simply using the same funding allocation in a much more effective way that will ultimately benefit a wider section of the indigenous community, specifically providing new opportunities for the development of indigenous visual arts in this State.

"The Liberal-National Government is using the funding to help WA indigenous artists more directly. This can only rationally be viewed as a positive move."

The details of the new focus for indigenous visual arts will be announced later this year following consultation with the Department of Culture and the Arts' Indigenous Arts Panel and other organisations, including the WA Art Gallery. The awards will remain as a national award.

The 2009 Western Australian Indigenous Art Awards exhibition is on display at the Art Gallery of Western Australia from tomorrow until November 15. Entry to the exhibition is free.

More information, including a list of the finalists for the 2009 Awards, is available at: <http://www.artgallery.wa.gov.au>

Media contact: Regina Titelius - 9213 6600 or 0412 009 173

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