

## **Submission to the Australian Government Productivity Commission's Issues Paper: *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Visual Arts and Crafts***

The Tim Fairfax Family Foundation (TFFF) acknowledges the Jagera and Turrbal people as the Traditional Custodians of Meanjin (Brisbane) where we are based and extends our acknowledgement to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations where we fund organisations and activities. We pay our respect to Elders past and present and to the continuation of the custodial, cultural, educational practices of Australia's First People.

### **Background on TFFF**

The TFFF exists to support rural, regional, and remote communities in Queensland and the Northern Territory to address the particular challenges they face due to their geographic location.

We aim to achieve this by building the capacity of communities to improve their vibrancy, connectedness, resilience, and sustainability.

We focus on initiatives that are locally driven; support leadership; encourage diversity; strengthen community and involve collaboration between both private and public sector partners.

We envisage a future where people in rural, regional, and remote areas of Queensland and the Northern Territory are afforded a level of opportunity equal to their metropolitan counterparts.

As of 30 June 2021, TFFF has a corpus of \$142m and since its creation in 2008 has distributed \$53.8m.

### **Recent Grants to Arts Centre or in Support of Marketplace Activity**

TFFF has a history of supporting capacity building activities at individual arts centres, peak body initiatives and marketplace improvements. In the period since FY17, TFFF has provided \$2.4m to organisations such as Durrmu Arts Aboriginal Corporation, Milingimbi Art and Culture Aboriginal Corporation, Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, Ngaruwanajirri Inc, Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation, and Desart for a range of capacity building activities. A summary of several of these projects and outcomes is included below:

#### **Durrmu Arts Aboriginal Corporation**

TFFF funding provided to Durrmu Arts Aboriginal Corporation supported cultural leaders and artists to host workshops and on-Country cultural trips to teach the art and language of harvesting materials for art, health, food, and ceremonial practices to the younger generations. All activities were documented using dedicated audio-visual equipment to capture harvesting processes and stories. A team of younger community members were engaged to learn the process of documentation and post-production from an experienced professional, ensuring a digital legacy for the program and a strong continuum of traditional practice in Peppimenarti. Following the funding period significant improvements were observed within the community, including the re-engagement of younger generations in learning about cultural and traditional practices related to harvesting organic materials, ceremony, and artmaking.

#### **Milingimbi Art and Culture Aboriginal Corporation**

Support provided to Milingimbi Art and Culture Aboriginal Corporation allowed the Centre to employ a dedicated Collections Coordinator and other necessary personnel to facilitate the repatriation work of their Djalkiri Collections Project, as well as creating a new digital database and photographic interface to showcase the Collection and enable online exchange. In the immediate period following the provision of funding, The Centre experienced significant growth with the Collection itself doubling in 12 months and now housing over 11,000 images, alongside notable increase in community participation.

## **Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair**

Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair was supported by TFFF to allow artists and art centres in remote areas in Queensland and the Northern Territory to participate in the Fair by providing travel assistance and professional development opportunities while at the Fair. Prior to the Fair's online pivot, the 2019 event saw it host 70 Art Centres, who collectively brought 169 artists and 164 Arts Workers – all directly attributed by the Fair to the TFFF support.

## **Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation**

Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) applied TFFF funds to support the wages for the new Manager (former Assistant Manager) and Studio Coordinator of its Bábbarra Women's Centre to consolidate the considerable progress made under the previously supported funding period and implement the next phase of the Centre's development. During the three-year funding period, BAC generated significant growth through the introduction of cost-effective production and outsourcing techniques and through diversification of its product offerings. With funding secured for key salaries, BAC was also able to direct some of its sales income towards travel costs for local women to present their work at exhibitions and art fairs both in Australia and abroad. This travel not only led to increased sales and brand-building opportunities but also yielded significant positive social and personal growth impacts for the artists, who have brought their learnings back to share with younger women in Maningrida.

## **Observations on Impact of Recent Grantmaking**

### **Supply Side**

1. General operating costs are the hardest costs for art centres to secure funding to support.
2. Investing in staffing and general operating costs provides art centres with predictability of cash flow.
3. Predictability of cash flow supports stability in staffing levels.
4. Persistent staffing levels allows the art centre to support greater numbers of artists and artists working in a greater variety of art forms.
5. More artists and more art forms mean greater supply of authentic, sellable works.
6. More sellable works means art centres have the capacity to increase the centre's (and artists') earned income.

### **Demand Side**

7. Many buyers in the market have little-to-no knowledge regarding the state of the Indigenous arts market or the issues attached to authenticity and/or the ethical sale of works. A few agents possess a great deal of knowledge regarding these issues.
8. This educational asymmetry creates the conditions for arbitrage and other unethical behaviour.
9. Art centres are not equipped to deliver the educational piece required to correct the market.
10. There is an opportunity to invest in bricks and mortar centres which act as educational, celebrational, cultural centres and galleries which help bring artists and buyers closer together to redress the information imbalance in the market: a verified marketplace for buyers to meet artists.