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ART FAIR TO REVEAL FAR NORTH'S INDIGENOUS ARTISTS TO THE WORLD

Work is underway to ensure that Cairns will host the nation's largest Indigenous Art Fair next year Premier Anna Bligh said today.

The inaugural Cairns Indigenous Art Fair will be held from 21-23 August 2009 on the waterfront at the city's iconic Heritage Sheds.

"This Art Fair will showcase the stunning works of Aboriginal and Torres Strait artists from the Far North to local, national and international audiences," Ms Bligh said.

"The event is also set to establish Cairns as a cultural tourism hot spot for art enthusiasts.

"I am pleased to announce the Director of the first Cairns Indigenous Art Fair will be curator, arts producer and consultant Michael Snelling.

"Michael Snelling is the former Chief Executive Officer of Major Brisbane Festivals and director of the Institute of Modern Art and the Experimental Art Foundation in Adelaide.

"I know Michael is already talking to major figures in the Indigenous Art market both in Queensland and interstate to ensure the first Fair will be a must-attend event for artists and buyers.

Ms Bligh said the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair, was a key part of the State Government's \$10.73 million Backing Indigenous Arts program which aimed to strengthen the unique Indigenous arts industry in Far North Queensland.

"In the past decade, a group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists from the region have made their mark on the international art industry," she said.

"The Cairns Indigenous Art Fair will present the work of these prominent artists, but it will also look to the future by featuring emerging and mid-career artists from the art centres.

"The Art Fair will provide art dealers and buyers with a unique opportunity to meet the artists and see the stunning environment and rich culture that provides the inspiration for their contemporary painting, sculpture and printmaking," she said.

Member for Barron River Steve Wettenhall said the Heritage Sheds - part of Cairns Ports' multi-million dollar waterfront redevelopment - would be the setting for the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair.

"The Art Fair will occur during the annual Cairns Festival and will also feature a performance program and symposium on Indigenous art," Mr Wettenhall said.

"I believe this event will become a huge draw card for visitors to our region and will have positive effect on the local community as well as boost our economy."

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Cairns Mayor Val Schier also said the event would attract cultural tourists from all over the country.

“The people of the Cairns region are proud of our many outstanding Indigenous artists and it is wonderful that their work will be exposed to national and international buyers.”

The Bligh Government has committed \$1million to fund the first three Cairns Indigenous Art Fairs until 2011.

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