

Travel Tales: Tjulyuru Regional Arts Gallery, Warburton, WA

ADSFAS Perth Hon. Treasurer **Peter Farr** writes:

During my career as a Consultant I was engaged many times on telecoms or cultural projects for Indigenous communities. From a visual arts aspect, the most memorable happened on a telecoms consultancy in the **Ngaanyatjarra Lands**, the traditional homelands of the Ngaanyatjarra Aboriginal people. This huge but lowly populated region is one of the most remote parts of Australia: the area is predominantly desert and is 1,000km NE of **Kalgoorlie** and 750km from **Alice Springs**.

Located in **Warburton**, the **Tjulyuru Cultural Civic Centre** is a civic and cultural hub for visitors and locals. The **Tjulyuru Regional Arts Gallery** exhibitions (see photos) draw from contemporary art practice in the region and the **Warburton Art Collection**.

Opened in 2000, the gallery is a regional centre for Ngaanyatjarra culture. It is a new period in a program that has evolved from the establishment of the **Warburton Arts Project** in 1989. Tentative first paintings in acrylic were followed by confident works, also rock art projects, art glass, sound recordings and festival production. The Project has given the Ngaanyatjarra people a voice and enabled them to express themselves, through the arts, to each other and to the wider community.



The **Warburton Collection** is the most substantial collection of Aboriginal art in Australia under the direct ownership and control of Aboriginal people.

The Warburton Arts Project has worked on many different projects including the development of Warburton Community's art glass facility, its rock art program and heritage "back to country" trips. The art glass facility in addition to providing a new medium of expression, has addressed a need to create an economic base for the arts project. This is the first instance of indigenous design being used in this medium and in this semi-industrial manufacturing method. The designs are developed from paintings and then drawn as cartoons. Elements of the pattern are then made into solid pattern pieces which are then placed by the artist on a horizontal surface. A plain glass panel is placed on top and the panel then rolled by helpers into the hot furnace whereupon the glass slumps around the pattern.



The large slump **glass panels** enhance the two-dimensional designs by being able to reflect and respond to their immediate environment by refracting light and colour. This quality can therefore be used to great effect in architectural environments and interiors.



Pulpurru Davies: Wangurnu 2010, 500x12mm float glass dish.

Gary Proctor who is a non-indigenous artist has been pivotal in establishing and continuing the documented and extensive Warburton collection and hence the ongoing preservation of Ngaanyatjarra culture. Not content with the market driven model of Aboriginal art prolific through the western deserts of Australia, Gary has championed diverse art forms, preservation of the best works for cultural heritage and pushes to go beyond traditional audiences creating a broader dialogue. A large slump glass kiln sits in one of the rooms off the central courtyard and is responsible for some of the most tangible works I have seen. The potential, artistically and architecturally is HUGE.



The **Warburton Youth Arts Project** sponsors a broad variety of workshops and activities designed to bring the young people in the community into the Centre to learn about music, crafts, painting, photography, film, and computer applications. The coexistence of past, present, and future that's evident at Warburton generates an enviable and exciting energy for residents and visitors alike.

How do you introduce Australian indigenous art to the people of China? Ask **Gary Proctor** who has devoted himself to managing and promoting the cultural life of Warburton. 'Tu Di - Shen Ti, Our Land - Our Body: Masterpieces from the Warburton Indigenous Art Collection' is a huge show. Curated and designed by Proctor and his Chinese wife **Ling**, it has introduced hundreds of thousands of Chinese visitors, in five major cities of China, to the Ngaanyatjarra artists of the Warburton Ranges and Western Desert lands. The sixty-five works, by 28 artists, are valued at close to four million dollars.

Despite travelling exhibitions to Sydney and China I'm sorry to say that given Warburton's remoteness, and that all visitors to the region must obtain a permit prior to travelling the Great Central Road, it's unlikely that any ADFAS Perth's members will get a chance to visit the Tjulyuru Regional Arts Gallery. However, they can view and shop online a unique range of authentic Aboriginal artefacts, original arts, craft, books CDs from local artists carrying a special energy of connection, community and care, at: <https://ngaanyatjarraku.wa.gov.au/index.php/tourist-information/hikashop-menu-for-categories-listing>

For more info go to: <https://www.abc.net.au/local/photos/2011/08/25/3302242.htm>. Or contact Gary Proctor, Director, Warburton Arts Project. M: 0430 546 096, E: gary.proctor@warburtonarts.com.au