



**SENATOR THE HON MITCH FIFIELD**

MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS  
MINISTER FOR THE ARTS  
MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER FOR DIGITAL GOVERNMENT  
MANAGER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS IN THE SENATE

**Senator Mitch Fifield, Minister for the Arts**

**2016 ASSP GALLERY  
ABORIGINAL ART, CRAFT AND WOODCARVINGS EXHIBITION  
Friday 5 February 2016**

**MESSAGE FROM MINISTER FIFIELD**

I am sorry I cannot be there today to enjoy the exhibition.

Australian Indigenous visual art is internationally recognised and sought after for its quality, innovation and cultural richness. It is vital that Government, educators and industry professionals work together to ensure that the skills and culture that underpin this world-class art are developed and strengthened for future generations.

The Government values the integral role that commercial galleries play in providing a market for visual art and in supporting both emerging and established artists. Commercial galleries, such as ASSP Gallery, are essential to the visual arts industry's continued viability and vitality, and make a significant contribution to Australian cultural life.

There is inherent value in art and the creative process, and the Government is committed to a strong and resilient Indigenous visual arts sector. We support a wide range of initiatives, including programs delivered through the Australia Council for the Arts.

I am particularly proud of our Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support program, which has been developing and supporting our professional Indigenous visual arts industry since 1992.

The program contributes to the operations of around 80 Indigenous-owned art centres, most in remote communities, as well as a number of marketing events, regional hubs and industry service organisations. Together, these organisations provide professional opportunities for more than 7,000 Indigenous artists and over 300 Indigenous arts workers.

In South Australia the program supports eight Indigenous-owned art centres, as well as the South Australian industry service organisation, Ananguku Arts. Ananguku Arts is a partner in delivering Our Mob, and funded the 2015 Our Young Mob prize.

I'd like to take the opportunity to commend the two 2015 Our Young Mob prize winners exhibited here, Waylon and Jayleighka. The two of you are a credit to Port Lincoln High School and its Aboriginal Arts Program.

As Port Lincoln High School understands, arts should be core to primary and secondary school education.

The arts provide the capacity and tools to understand the world and to express what is seen and felt: the arts help to develop skills for life and living.

There is significant evidence that participation in the arts improves literacy and numeracy, classroom engagement, and school attendance.

Congratulations to all of the artists featured here, and to ASSP Gallery for a fabulous exhibition.

**MITCH FIFIELD**