

# Linking Hands

NEWSLETTER



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## Epenarra artists prepare for Melbourne exhibition

From 10-13 July, the Epenarra Artists from the remote Indigenous community of Wutunugurra in the Northern Territory will hold their first Melbourne exhibition at the Mossgreen Gallery in South Yarra.

The artists have named their exhibition “The Hills Have Eyes”, as each piece either incorporates the hills that surround the community or represents them abstractly.

It includes work from five senior elders in the community, who are all sisters. World Vision project officer Liz Mullen explained that the elders have a special role in supporting the younger artists and ensuring that cultural protocols are adhered to.

Unlike many Indigenous art groups, the Epenarra Artists

have decided not to paint their dreaming stories. “As a result the exhibition shows the importance of the land and their strong connection to it without compromising on their strongly held beliefs about the sacredness of their dreaming stories. The artworks are incredibly beautiful and each artist has their own unique style,” Liz said.

This Melbourne showcase, which is proudly supported by the Stonnington City Council, follows on from the success of their 2009 debut exhibitions in Brisbane and at World Vision’s Birrung Gallery in Sydney.

Exhibitions are a critical component of World Vision’s Indigenous Art Project being implemented in remote communities in the Northern Territory. They help to

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“The Hills Have Eyes” Exhibition • 10-13 July  
Mossgreen Gallery, 310 Toorak Road, South Yarra

Artist Janella puts the finishing touches on one of her works.



At a Wutunugurra community exhibition, works by the Epenarra Artists hang above the red dirt that inspired many of them.



Epenarra Artists and World Vision staff celebrate an exhibition opening at Birrung Gallery, Sydney 2009.

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promote the individual achievements of the artists and the group as a whole, and they also provide professional development opportunities.

Unlike in other Indigenous art centres, the Epenarra Artists are involved in the entire exhibition process, from ordering and paying for art supplies, to telling the story of their art on opening night. Money from art sales goes directly to the artists, and is used to cover the group's running costs.

"Through exhibitions, artists and art workers gain a valuable insight into aspects of the art industry, which from the remote communities they come from often seem out of reach," says Liz.

## With eyes on the future, Terrence discovers his past

**"I didn't know much about my Aboriginal culture or where I was from or anything because I was adopted when I was nine months old," explained 19-year-old Terrence Murphy from Sydney.**

But by participating in World Vision's Young Mob Leadership Project, which is supported by Linking Hands, Terrence said he has learned "heaps" about his heritage – and how to be proud of it.



Participating in the Young Mob Leadership Program inspired Terrence to support others in his community.

The Young Mob Leadership Program enables urban Indigenous youth like Terrence to gain skills in public speaking and leadership. It also offers opportunities for them to learn more about their Indigenous culture.

Since completing the eight-week program, Terrence said he has become more confident. It has also inspired him to support other young Indigenous males in his community.

"Just because you are Aboriginal it doesn't mean that you can't do anything or can't achieve anything," explained Terrence, who in August this year will tackle the treacherous Kokoda Trail with Indigenous youth from around Australia.

Terrence works with the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence. He is the co-founder of a tennis program, which offers free after-school lessons to youth in Redfern and which is creating employment opportunities for Indigenous people.

Terrence was able to road test his public speaking skills when he and other Indigenous youth met Prince William during his tour of Australia earlier this year. "At first I was like, 'why did they pick me?' and then we all got to sit down





Young friends Liam and Boaz are regular attendees at this World Vision-established playgroup.

## Advancing early childhood wellbeing in the East Pilbara

World Vision has teamed up with BHP Billiton and five Martu communities in the East Pilbara region of Western Australia to implement a program focused specifically on improving the health and wellbeing of Indigenous children aged 0-5 years.

The Pilbara Early Childhood Care and Development Program aims to increase the capacity of the communities to set up and run early childhood activities and centres, covering areas including equipment, staffing, training, mentoring, innovative childhood curriculum and literacy, and the development of local language resources.

An additional and significant goal of this initiative is to promote the importance of early childhood education and school readiness within the broader community.

Research conducted in the East Pilbara region in 2007 by the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research showed that children living in the region were developmentally vulnerable. In the local communities themselves, families acknowledge that there are limited health and educational opportunities for their small children.

Infant mortality rates in remote Indigenous communities are almost three times higher than the national average. The Australian Government has identified the development of early childhood care and development services as one of six major strategies to be followed in efforts to reduce Indigenous disadvantage.

As part of its Indigenous Investment Strategy, which has a focus on maternal and child health, BHP Billiton has committed funding of \$5 million to the program over five years.

Dr Mark Moran, Head of World Vision's Australia Programs, said the program "promotes the emotional, intellectual, physical and social development" of children, focusing on



Project Manager Deborah Gough talks with community council members Janelle, Tracy and Jasmine about the Pilbara Early Childhood Care and Development Program.

the key areas of healthy environments, maternal health, early childhood education, training and governance.

Since the program commenced last year, playgroups have been established in two communities and early childhood care and development committees made up of local women have been initiated. Important relationships with schools and other organisations within the local communities are currently being established.

When work started in the community of Jigalong, the local school was quick to provide support, offering the use of a spare classroom for early childhood activities. The local women then organised to clean-up the space and prepare it for playgroup activities.

"The women have made the playgroup their own," one program staff member commented. "They clean the room and set out toys each day; they help the kids with craft activities and set up a morning snack. The mums have time together and plan their next activities and then they clean up after each session ready for the next day."

"Communities are really getting behind this program," Dr Moran explained.

"We will work directly with parents, carers and families and provide them with training opportunities that build upon their skills. Our aim is to ensure that they will be able to provide more sustainable early learning and health related activities for their children beyond the life of the program."