



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Wednesday, 12 May 2004

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Indigenous Art

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.50 a.m.): Queensland's indigenous artists are making their mark on new canvas—the international art market. I am delighted to advise the House of the early results of the current exhibition in the United States. Out of Country, an initiative of the Queensland Indigenous Arts Marketing Export Agency, was opened by the Minister for Education and the Arts, Anna Bligh, at the Australian embassy in Washington DC on 1 May. She must have had some great sales skills because 26 works sold in the first week. That is close to half the 56 works displayed. These sales have reaped approximately \$48,500. The embassy, which has been remarkably supportive—and I want to thank it today—reports more than 2,200 people have viewed the exhibition to date and there is loads of potential for more sales.

I would hope all members would support this indigenous art strategy that the government is pursuing. It is not just about arts; it is about jobs and opportunities for indigenous people. I seek leave to have the remainder of my ministerial statement incorporated in *Hansard*. I hope people will read it because this is the future for indigenous people.

Leave granted.

The exhibition continues until 27 May in Washington DC, before touring to Charlottesville to show at the prestigious Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, University of Virginia, from 11 June to 14 August.

The program of events for the exhibition has included two Smithsonian Associates lectures, by Jennifer Herd—artist and head of the Indigenous visual arts unit, Griffith University—and Vic McGrath, Torres Strait Islander artist, Elder and member of the Queensland Indigenous Arts Marketing Export Agency advisory board.

Both lectures sold out.

Along with Ms Herd and Mr McGrath, three other Indigenous artists attended the official functions: Fiona Foley, who is currently based in New York; Craig Koomeeta and Ken ThaidaySnr.

They are among 29 artists represented in

Out of Country, which introduces Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art to the American market.

It includes paintings, prints, sculptures and fabrics, from regions including Aurukun, Lockhart River, the rainforests of the tropical north, the Torres Strait, Central and Southern Queensland.

Out of Country was a revelation for American art lovers and collectors, whose previous experience of Australian Aboriginal art was the desert art of the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

Queensland Aboriginal art is distinct from the desert dots, and Torres Strait Islander visual arts are rarely seen on the international stage.

Guests invited to the opening included senior US administration, congressional, business and military people, collectors, museum representatives and senior Embassy staff.

I gather prominent and influential people are now the proud owners of Queensland Indigenous art.

Out of Country is not a flash in the pan, it is part of an emerging pattern of success for our Indigenous artists.

As I advised the House last month, another exhibition arranged by the Queensland Indigenous Arts Marketing Export Agency, at Dusseldorf in December and January, sold 19 of 39 works displayed.

Each of these sales is a symbol of the future for Indigenous people, because the art industry offers untold social, cultural and economic rewards.

Young people like members of the Lockhart River Art Gang—who are meteors on the international art scene—show what can be achieved by artists from remote communities who have talent, ambition, and the right guidance.