

Garma Festival of Traditional Culture 2009

Indigenous Creative Industries Key Forum

ANKAAA Panel Discussion: Art and the Homelands

Monday 10th August 2009

Panel Members:

Djambawa Marawili: Yilpara Homeland, Blue Mud Bay, North East Arnhem Land; Buku Larrnggay Mulka Centre; ANKAAA Chairman. **DM**

Wamud Namok (deceased): Kabulwarnamyo Homeland, Central Arnhem Land Plateau, West Arnhem Land; Injalak Arts, Gunbalanya. **WN**

Dean Yibarbuk: Manwurrk Ranger, Bininj Fire ecologies, Secretary Warddeken Land Management Association **DY**

Ray Nadjamerrek: Grandson of Wamud Namok **RN**

Freddie Timms, Ngarmaliny (naramali), Janama: President Jirrawun Arts, Wyndham, WA; ANKAAA Director. **FT**

Richard Gandhuwuy: Dhambala Homeland; Chairperson Elcho Island Arts, Marthakal Homelands Resource Centre, Galiwin'ku. **RG**

Dion Teasdale: Manager, Elcho Island Arts **DT**

Christina Davidson: CEO, ANKAAA **CD**



L – R: Djambawa Marawili, Dean Yibarbuk, Freddie Timms and Richard Gandhuwuy at the Garma Festival of Traditional Culture, Gulkula, Eastern Arnhem Land. All photos © Yothu Yindi Foundation / Garma Festival.



Christina Davidson (CD): Good morning everybody. My name is Christina Davidson, and I'm the CEO for ANKAAA, which is the Association of Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists. We're the hosts of this session today. To start with, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land that we're standing on, and also to make a special mention of the amazingly strong women of ANKAAA, and of all the homelands, who sit here today – and the ones who aren't here. I'll start by introducing our panel. First of all we've got Djambawa Marawili, from Yilpara homeland, who's Chairman for ANKAAA, and is leading the panel today as well.

Following up I'll move down to the end to the senior gentleman third from your left, who's Wamud Namok, from Kabulwarnamyo homeland, in the central plateau of West Arnhem Land, and Injalak Arts Centre. He's brought with him today two people, Dean Yibarbuk, who's also from the same homeland and who's the senior Manwurrk Ranger from Bininj Fire ecologies, and who's responsible for leading up with Wamud, a very interesting, innovative and world significant fire management program on their homelands. He's also the secretary of the Warddeken Land Management Association and a traditional owner of that area. Wamud has also especially asked to bring along with him his grandson, Ray Nadjamerrek, who lives on the homeland with him and is an artist and student ranger, studying under his grandfather.

On the far left hand side we have another very senior Australian and internationally recognized artist, Freddie Timms. Ngarrmaliny is his Gija name. Freddie is President of Jirrawun Arts in WA and I'll introduce him further before he speaks.

Moving back over to the centre here, we have Richard Gandhuwuy, from Dhambala homeland on Elcho Island, which is under the Marthakal Homelands Resource Centre, and he has brought with him Dion Teasdale, who is the Manager of Elcho Arts. So we'll have a little bit of team talking today, as some of the people will be talking in groups. I'll pass you on to Djambawa Marawili to introduce the session.



Djambawa Marawili (DM): Good day everybody. We're here to know about art, we're here so you can learn from us and we can learn from you mob. So ask questions. My name is Djambawa Marawili and I'm from Blue Mud Bay, that is my place. It is a homeland that has been there for 20 or 30 years now. It was in the early 30s when my people were moved away by missionaries to other communities. We knew, my father knew, that we were moved away. That was because of some influence that came into Blue Mud Bay and that was the missionaries who wanted to go and build settlements or missions and Art Centres and shops and that's why we were dragged away. In those days the art wasn't really shown publicly. The people who left those homelands and their country, the rivers, their beaches, it was a place where people didn't know about. People were travelling on those areas. But when the politicians came in and the governments and other influence came in, people felt they wanted to show themselves – who are they? Where are they from? One way they could show themselves was they made patterns, paintings...and that way – they showed who are they - in those early days. Today the art is really public; you can see it in the Art Centres, or galleries, it's all around the world now. But to me it was sharing the knowledge and sharing the country by writing it with the hair brush, instead of writing it on paper or making it really a big thick document, by using hair brush. To me it is telling that he's somebody, she or he is somebody.

My homeland - I really wanted to live in that country. When my father decided to go away we were ending up here at Yirrkala. We were moved away from Numbulwar to Grootte Island and all those areas and moved away to Yirrkala. In those days there was an Art Centre in Yirrkala so people, other people, who live in Yirrkala were doing their arts. There is two arts - one is just the outside art were you can see the image, just telling whatever the animals are, whatever the fish are, they're on that rock or they're on that sea or on the river or on the land...but the other one, the other paintings, that's telling us, he is making a document, he is telling that he has another

side of a painting, which doesn't always come out, where the leader has their own significant, sacred sites. So today some of the patterns are now in the public and the more sacred sites are keeping as his own.

Homeland is really important to me anyway. What I call homeland – home is my land. It's where I can breathe fresh wind, where I can walk along the beach or in the bushes – that's giving me strength. And all those things are all you need under the land. People who are living in the country, they know. They felt that they are really getting strong by their land, and their patterns. For us, young people like me, I can hear what he is talking about, what that fella's talking about. But for me, when I grew up, I learnt since I was very young, I have to learn from my father that it is the significance of our life - we need the land. The songs, that is the weapons, the tools, armbands, dilly bags, stepping sticks, spears, didgeridoo...that is all from the land. They all combine; it's all in the land. Those equipments that we use like didgeridoos, stepping sticks, armbands, dancing, singing, naming, its from the land to me. Homeland is really important. We moved away, we would like to do the same thing when we have experiences in every mission. I wanted to do the same thing – go and build Art Centres back in my own country, I wanted to do that. Because all the art in the Art Centres now, it's not from Yirrkala. Some from Yirrkala but most of them are from the homelands, the land back there where our people moved away but to remind them, those people who moved away into a community, it's by doing patterns and painting that it reminds them that they are still back in their country. Those patterns are all coming from the other country - from the other side - where all the missions are, where all the settlements are, the communities are, from up that way. To me, I rather do the same thing back in my own community, because I want to develop my own community too; I want to give them a job – because that is what we're talking about now. We're talking about jobs, to get real jobs. And that is my priority. I want to develop that in my own home country. I would like to do this and I have been doing it. To me it is really important. I want to develop back in my own community, which is where I can see the land, I can go and visit the land, and that is the way to go – for me, I'm talking about myself. Here I am standing up in front of a crowd of people who are listening to me but my interest is back there. Here I am showing myself now because I cannot sell my art back there, I have to sell it here in Buku Larrnggay to tell that I am from somewhere, from Blue Mud Bay, and that is my priority. Anyway I would like to make it really short. Patterns and designs it's like a daughter to me. I live with that pattern and design, it's who I am. And that is my priority. Thank you very much for hearing.

[applause]

CD: Thank you to Djambawa. Just briefly, I think it's probably useful to point out that historically the Art Centre movement and in fact the internationally renowned and incredibly successful Indigenous art movement has developed in close parallel with the homelands movement and over exactly the same time span. And this is sort of a basic historical fact, but it isn't something that I think has not been nearly widely enough remarked on, studied or thought about in terms of the interdependence of the two situations. As we'll see, in I'm sure all of the talks today, there is a deep and abiding relationship between art and the homelands. And I think we're incredibly honoured today that these senior artists have chosen to come and speak together, travelling a long way from their homelands to be here and I think it's a sign of how important this subject is to them that they've chosen to come. And I know there are other artists in the audience today who've also been very important in relation to art and homelands and art and country, so recognizing them.

I have a small statement to read out. Djambawa invited the manager from his Art Centre, Buku Larrnggay Mulka, to come along and accompany him today. Will Stubbs was unable unfortunately to come, but he has sent a short statement so I will read that out to you to go with Djambawa's talk. Will sent this message:

[CD reading statement by Will Stubbs, Manager Buku Larrnggay Mulka:]

Without a strong culture there cannot be a strong Indigenous art and the homelands are the hearth and heart of Yolngu culture in this region, as well as being a site of production of much of the great art of North East Arnhem Land. It is not easy living in homelands and people who have been living there for forty years and forty thousand years before that don't do it for fun. We don't do enough to support them and we are not alone in that. The people who are living on homelands should be respected and honoured, not treated like some kind of problem.

[applause]

CD: So it's my enormous pleasure and honour to introduce the eldest and most senior of our speakers today, Wamud Namok, and I'll give you a short introduction and then Dean will speak together with him and translate for him. I haven't said the - in some ways obvious but perhaps not - fact that most people on the panel here speak up to six or seven languages, of which English is in no cases the first one. So my little trouble pronouncing names sometimes is nothing compared to what they are doing. Most of them will be speaking today in English but Wamud will speak with translation. Wamud is a senior elder and highly respected ceremonial leader in the West Arnhem Land estates and of the Mok clan. From the late 1970s he led many people to set up homelands in various locations in the West Arnhem Land region as an important part of the early homelands movement. He developed people's traditional knowledge and understanding to manage and care for country and taught many people to paint on rock and bark, educating them about their stories. He was taught by his father, painting in the rock galleries of the Western Arnhem Land plateau. In the mid 1970s he started painting on bark to show his grandchildren and young artists how to keep up their strong obligations to culture and to maintain the art system. He went on to become a nationally and internationally recognized artist. He was awarded the Order of Australia in 2004 in recognition of his services to the arts and of his role in fostering land management. So as I said before, Wamud has come together with another speaker who is very significant in his own right, but is mostly here to be supporting Wamud today, Dean Yibarbuk, and I'll pass you on to him.



Dean Yibarbuk (DY): Thank you. Thank you I am Dean Yibarbuk, I am a senior ranger at Manwurrk programs, I'm also a fire ecologist, also a secretary of the Warddeken Land Management Company Limited, a non-profit company that we established. Basically I'm going to share a story about old man Wamud Namok, my uncle up here, and also my experience in the past that I've worked and I've seen happen. In 1928, when old man was born - before that his father lived around up in the plateau at a time when people lived in homelands - it's very significant. I see today, today's life. In Binning or Yolngu way of living in bush or homelands, or in remote areas, is a very healthy way of living. We cared for our country. We cared for our children. We cared for our arts. Art is the stories. Before the arts became publicly shown and known to the many nations, the art was in ourselves. We kept that art as images and stories for our people and for our children's future. Today the art has become well known and became commercialized for industries around the world and around the territory and around Australia.

Having to live in a homeland, old Wamud and his family moved around from place to place, as they were gathering uncles and aunties and looking after the country of the whole plateau landscape. The important thing is, since his childhood he's been learning through art through his dad, stories telling. Telling stories from different clan groups at the plateau. Since the Western, European settlers started to come in, all the families from the plateau, all the clans who stayed at the plateau, drifted off to the coastline, leaving the place empty. And the people became a Diaspora. People of no land. They wandered. The country was waiting for them. The art was waiting, the stories were waiting for them at the bush. But the people had been drift off from the homelands to the European settlements, mission settlements, government settlements and all those, you name it. Because Europeans thought we weren't able to live. But they were wrong. In those times, Wamud and his other family group started to move out from the plateau. Went to the mining camps, in many areas, some drifted off to Darwin, some in the missions, to be able to live, or able to get into some exotic food. It wasn't a traditional food where they used to live on, but that was something that really really touched old people, this exotic food, they drift off from our land. And I guess from that period on, the country was still waiting, but people were hardly finding their way back to their home because the areas became inaccessible by road in that period of time.

1976, when the land rights movement became strong and the homeland movement came to exist, people went back. This old man Wamud had a great knowledge of each individual group of homes. He took various people and set up a homeland for different

groups because he knew the places where no one could understand or know. In 1977 the arts became more efficient in commercializing. Before that the art was well hidden in the cave, in the rocks. His children and him would go out and learn about the teaching of those arts in the rock. Mainly those rock arts are hunting and gathering. People ran off hunting, caught some food, caught some animals, came back and drew a picture on the rock. Or even, some people went off down the coast, saw their first white man, came back and drew a picture of the first white man up in the escarpment. They drew a picture of cattle, buffalo, because this was something very new – they had never seen before. With the heavy hoof, big horn, big body – people got surprised! Our native animals, only kangaroo, and our favourite food was emu as well. For those big animals, it's something new for our own people you know, they were so excited so they ran back up in the escarpment and started to paint this animal who we saw down in the ground, or up in the coastline. People got really excited so you know, started drawing.

So at the time, this old man as he grew up moved around from place to place, through ceremonies with his father. At the age of seventeen he moved out, went to different areas, where other people lived and learned about their culture as well, and trading materials with each other in the way that we trade at the present time. It is the same system today. But a lot of the understanding from this old man, he had a great experience of art, of story telling, of his own people up in the plateau. Just recently, I was asked to give him a hand to set up a land management program up in the plateau. I was interested in his story of fire, so I got involved and we started to talk about it and started to initiate this program through the Northern Land Council Caring for Country program. And he said to me, if I start this project, I would like to bring my people back up in the plateau so they can sit at home, look after home, manage the country, listen to the birds, look at the land, listen to the wind, because everything in the bush, our homeland, it's a spiritual country – connected with our stories beyond our belief, from generations after generations after generations. So as he got married and had kids, and now he's got grandkids, he's showing that art to his grandchildren and his sons and his daughters as well. He's becoming real famous in his time. Just recently, in about the last three years, four years, his last wisdom was he drew up a nice big white kangaroo, supposed to be a black kangaroo – walaroo, but the images he left it there for his children and he said 'when I'm gone this is my story for my children and they will continue to draw art and stories belonging to these languages'. As for many artists today, when people paint, they paint with minds and understanding the image they belong to, their totems. In eastern, western, southern parts - all the artists. That's my belief. They sit and think and they hear stories, spiritual stories coming from their brains, from ancestors, from their fathers and their grandfathers roots, and travels into their minds. And successfully, they put those images, also the stories behind the images, not a sacred one, but public, open stories, they give to the most international people or Australian people about the arts. Thank you very much ladies and gentlemen.

[applause]

Wamud Namok speaks to Dean Yibarbuk in language who translates:

DY for WN: He's very very happy to be here, and he's acknowledging the traditional owners of Garma. It's his first time for him to come over here; he never been east before and never met our Gumatj families, our Rirratjingu families, Warramiri families, he never met them before, this is his first time. He's very very happy to be here sharing his experience and understanding. He said: My background, I'm an artist; I've shown many young people. Today I'm retired but young people today, they're continuing to do art, either on bark or on paper. He's very very happy to be here and meeting a lot of people up here, his first time.

CD: I'm sure everybody agrees with me that it's an enormous honour to have Wamud here and to have listened to his words today. And especially emphasizing the importance of that teaching element which is so often not acknowledged as well – that incredible teaching that goes on that really is the backbone of the Indigenous art industry, that passing on of the culture.

The next person I want to introduce is the Mr. Freddie Timms. Ngarmaliny is his Gija name; he is a nationally and internationally recognized senior Gija artist and president of Jirrawun Arts, Wyndham, in the East Kimberley. So he's come a long way, all that way over from the Kimberley, to be with us today. He started up Jirrawun Arts with

Tony Oliver in 1994 as an independent, non-government funded business to represent the art of a small group of six leading Gija artists. He was born at Police Hole at Bedford Downs in 1946 and grew up on Lissadell Station and then worked as a stockman on stations in the East Kimberley for 14 years. He went back to Bow River, Lissadell and to the NT down south. He settled at Frog Hollow, near Warmun, a small community set up by his brother-in-law, Jack Britten, and lived there for forty years. Freddie knew and worked with Rover Thomas and the other first generation Warmun artists, and joined in dancing early performances of Rover Thomas' well-known Gurrir Gurrir ceremony. Freddie will be talking to you today about his art and country. I need to make an apology in advance that Freddie has provided us with a map of his country that he was very keen to be talking to, but unfortunately reproductive technologies have meant that we've got limited numbers of them. So we'll do our best, I've just got five or six copies of that. So we'll work with Freddie and perhaps I'll ask some of the people from ANKAAA to hold them up and bring them around when he wants that. I've got them at the front here. We tried to get multiples but we couldn't.



Freddie Timms (FT): Hello, I'm Freddie Timms, from the Kimberley, my Gija name is Ngarrmaliny and I'm a Janama man. I want to say about the Kimberley, I left my home when I was ten years of age. My father and mother took me in Lissadell, then when they died I just grew up with other people. I was there in Lissadell, floating around, and I was thirteen, and when I got up to fourteen, I started working on the stock. Fourteen, fifteen, I was sixteen I was gone, working on another place, trying to learn stock work, all sorts of thing. And I moved on, down Northern Territory down south, from Warmun and then I came back to my family. I was there for a while, working, then I went to Frog Hollow, I was living with my wife for forty years and I went to Sydney, down Wollongong, with Tony Oliver, and I was working down in Sydney, in Wollongong, for five years, then we moved on, back in Kimberley. We went to Darwin, started work around there, from Darwin back to Kununurra, from Kununurra we went out bush, working, but then we went back to Kununurra, painting there, we made a few more dollars and we moved on to Wyndham. We got a big art centre in Wyndham and then we keep working. That's where we made a lot of money but this time we can't make more money, because all around the world they got no money. And this one here, that's where I paint. It's part of Lissadell, place called Blackfella Creek. In the early days, three blokes got killed there. I put this map this morning and I want to try to get help from Northern Territory or whatever. I'm with Djambawa and Christina, yeah, and I been working for six years with Djambawa and I was very sick. I couldn't come up in Darwin and they called me up this year, come to Garma. That's all I wanted to say and I need help for my homeland. Thank you.

[applause]

CD: Thank you very much to Freddie and perhaps if there are some people here who don't know that ANKAAA, the Association of Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists, is an Aboriginal-governed association, and has a board of twelve Indigenous people who run it and who are the bosses of the association and the staff in the office work for them. And Freddie and Djambawa have both worked together – that's what Freddie was talking about, on building up that ANKAAA in recent years, along with a number of other directors and the board, a number of whom are sitting at the front over here on my right.

Now I'd like to move on to introduce the final pair of speakers, which is Richard Gandhuwuy – Richard is the traditional owner of his homeland in Garrawurra on Elcho Island, and a senior member of the Gawa clan and nation. He is a senior artist, active in supporting his countrymen and women. Gandhuwuy is also a consultant in business and cultural management. I'm going to pass you on to Dion Teasdale, who is the manager of the Art Centre Richard works with, and he'll do a further introduction.



Dion Teasdale (DT): Good afternoon, and thanks Christina. I'd just like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, past and present. It's great to be here. I'll just give you a little bit of context I guess about Elcho Island Arts before I hand

over to Gandhuwuy, who can tell you a lot more about the vital role that Art Centres play in communities in supporting and developing homelands. So Gandhuwuy can really talk about his personal experience, but the organisation that I work for is kind of unique – and we thought it would be an interesting model to just give you a little bit of insight into today.

Elcho Island Arts has been community-managed since 1992. It's located in Galiwin'ku, which is the major community on Elcho Island, and Elcho if you don't know is about 550 kilometres northeast of Darwin. It has an Aboriginal Executive and a parent organisation whose name is Marthakal Homeland Resource Centre. Marthakal is charged with supporting and delivering a range of services to twenty nine homelands across the Galiwin'ku, or Elcho Island, region. Fourteen of those homelands are permanently inhabited and the Art Centre in Galiwin'ku not only services the community and the artists in Galiwin'ku but also the artists living and working in those fourteen homelands. So it's very much a kind of hub and spokes model. And at the Art Centre we have a team of Yolngu artists working with us, and our job in the Art Centre is to ... we have artists from homelands coming into the Art Centre to develop, create and sell their workbut also it's our job to travel out on a regular basis to our homelands and work with the artists in the homelands. And a number of the homelands have become quite successful and have started to emerge with their own strong identity and their own strong cultural product and are creating real jobs. Some of those jobs are around cultural tourism, but they're also about hands-on cultural experiences. Some of them you may have come across, even here at Garma, are the Arnhem Weavers, based at Mapuru and also cultural tours to Nyinyikay, and also there's cultural tours to Matamata, which is another homeland just on the mainland.

We work with about one hundred and twenty five artists at the moment and the majority of those artists have maintained very strong links to their homelands. About 50% of our artists currently live on their homelands and travel into Galiwin'ku regularly, and most of the one hundred and twenty five artists, who use all natural materials, collect all of their materials from their homelands. So, as Christina mentioned before when she was reading out Will's statement, Art Centres do play a very vital role in supporting artists and developing and sustaining homelands. That's probably all you need to hear from me, but Richard Gandhuwuy, as Christina mentioned, is a senior man from Elcho Island. He's also a senior artist, he's part of a group exhibition in Darwin at the moment, and he's a finalist in this year's Telstra Award. Gandhuwuy lives and creates his art in his homeland, which is called Dhambala, and I've had the great privilege of staying at Dhambala with Gandhuwuy and his family, so it's a unique privilege. Anyway I'll hand over to Gandhuwuy and he can tell you more about how he fits into this web.



Richard Gandhuwuy (RG): Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. My name is Richard Gandhuwuy, clan nation Garrawurra. Elcho Island is between Gove and Jabiru, within the region. Living in Galiwin'ku, we've got a lot of clan nations over there, a lot of outstations, Dion was talking about our homelands. I have a particular homeland within Elcho Island, and five kilometres south. I'm not going to talk about the history of the Art Centre or this other area, and Dion was talking about recentralising people in Elcho Island, Milingimbi, Maningrida, all those Arnhem Land areas. I'm not going to talk about that because you already heard that one, loud and clear. I wanted to talk about Dhambala, and the outstation over there, what it means to be there, why it interests me over there, why going back to there as opposed to being in Galiwin'ku area or town area. Well the reason that I going back and establish the homelands, is because I have a purpose to do that. And the purpose is that I will lift up the cultural heritage, the value, and hand it over to the nation, my clan nation, through the family first, internal. That is the reason. I didn't move to the outstation because I like it that way, I didn't want to live with the mix of people over there, that's not the reason. The reason is that I will be handing over properly and professionally their lives back into the land. That is the number one story. That is the only life over there. That is where the real fresh food is to live. That is the only place they will feel the wind free, to follow my steps. I wanted to help them to live there. That is their community. I hope they will build up their own town over there, quietly, living quietly. Plenty of food over there, fish and everything, all there. And thinking very clear. And keep their law. That this culture is strong and maintained; that is the purpose. And I wanted to be there all

the time, and helping to know what is the real value and quality within the homeland. So that's very important, I wanted to stand for that one. And I will leave them as strong, very strong in their culture, in their belief, and be friendly for other people, and serve the other people if they come and get their cultural experience. And that is my story about Dhambala.

What else there you starting up... Well, I show them over there at Dhambala - you can do the business as well. So I have started up the Dhambala Aboriginal Cultural Tours - that's the Dhambala brochure. I am showing about what is the meat, to the foreigner for trading purposes. The story is here. I was talking about being friendly for other people, and sharing that land and culture. This is the story. So I am starting up something for them as well. I am starting up the fishing area - go and get your fresh food - fish, wild honey, shell, eat fresh. Don't go to the store and eat the tin one. No, stay here, you get fresh fish there, all the time every day, and go there [the store] limited sometime if you need it. That's the purpose for homelands. This is the introduction of the business school, if they want business. If they want to stay, do some painting. Because it's the only way that they will share their experiences with other people. So I think it's very important, when I move into the homeland. I am very confident over there. I am getting the life from the nature, wind, water, and I wanted to pass that knowledge that father left for them through me. My grandchildren. And I wanted to pass that one, and I will pass to my grandchildren and their grandchildren, as I will live in this world with the knowledge, with the dignity, with the light, and be strong. That is my story. Our particular place is called Galiwin'ku. So ladies and gentlemen, thank you for listening.

[applause]

CD: Before we move to questions, which we will in a second, I just wanted to remark on one thing that we all read stories frequently in the media that there isn't viable businesses to be had out on those homelands. You know, it's sort of a running cliché of the media, but the people that we have here today are living examples of how far from the truth that can be. Nearly all of them are starting work or right in the middle of a whole series of different business ventures that are taking place on homelands, of which the arts industry is one, but fishing industries, cultural tourism and we've only heard a little of the extraordinary fire management project that has been going on in Wamud's community, where they are being paid money for carbon emission trading to do traditional burning on their land. So they are being paid to stay up there on that homeland to do real work for the whole world, as are all of the artists who are here - paid people, doing real work, real art, in a real industry, on their homelands. So I think that's an important message that people came here today to put out.

So I'll pass onto questions, but before that I might just do a little bit of business. We do have some biographies of the artists here, but the photocopy situation meant that we don't have very many of them. So if there are people who are keen to have them, please come up at the end and put your email addresses down here, and I'd be happy to pass them onto you. Also, if you'd like copies of the Arts Backbone magazine electronically that our organisation puts out, please put your name down and we'll make sure that you get that. So I'll call for questions if there are any questions for the speakers.

Audience member: Thank you. Thank you wholeheartedly, thank you. One of my concerns is copyright of traditional medicine. Hang onto it, and just keep a watch on that. You tell the stories of the traditional medicine and hang onto the ownership of the traditional medicine because there's a lot of pharmaceutical companies that wouldn't mind a piece of your magic. But, coming from a secondary school I would like to know a little bit more about the young man that has been honoured to sit with the elders and his words please. How he understands how he gets to be there.

CD: Ray, I think they're putting you on the spot!

Ray Nadjamerrek (RN): Can you say it again please?

Audience member: How honoured do you feel, and what do you learn, from your elders? And how can you pass that knowledge on?



RN: Well um, it's good to be here, and continuing learning from my grandfather's cultures and doing that artwork on that rock art with...

DY: Perhaps I'll give you a little bit of a background, because young Ray, it's his first time on the panel. He's learning through this process, but the young person like that sitting in this sort of panel for the first time, that sort of question that you raise – I think it's a great privilege sitting down, learning and listening, so that they are able to continue teaching his age, and as he grows up, slowly he will teach his future young children. That's the importance there.

[applause]

Also, I think you mentioned medicine and intellectual property rights. Of course we do have to be very very careful. We choose, because of course it can disappear, that sort of knowledge, anywhere in the world, and we won't have any touch on that. But we have a professional Indigenous political group set up that are looking after our interests and fighting for our rights, that's the Northern Land Council, plus other political organisations like Northern Australian Land and Sea Management organisation that has been established right across the board in the northern regions. So when we're talking about intellectual property rights, we have people who are there and are looking after our rights, and will make sure that we don't give so much information to any public, because it's our own business, our medicine, our rights to remain with our own people on our land. Thank you.

[applause]

CD: Any more questions?

Audience member: Hi, my name's Serrie, and I've been visiting a community over in West Arnhem Land, and I was just wondering if you on the panel have some advice to give to smaller communities who've missed out on funding from the government currently and are going to struggle a bit to keep going. Just what advice would you give them? Where can they go to start these very innovative industries? Thanks.

DY: In my region, me and this old chap are doing the fire burning program, so with this company ConocoPhillips who has a local gas plant in Darwin. We've been engaged with that program for the last ten years, learning this very new program. Recently, a month ago, we tabled up this information together to be able to have better information. Also to do with the climate change as well. Of course our traditional burning is the way we been burning the country for thousands and thousands of years and managing our country, our resources as well. Not only in the plateau, but I believe in any Indigenous country, like in northern areas, especially where we have strong land rights and Indigenous freehold title. What we have found, what we have experienced, at Kabulwarnamyo in the last couple of months, hopefully those tables of information that we're giving to the scientists that we're working with, that is – that fire management, looking after the country, looking after the land, is a way of managing our own resources. So if that evidence shows that the method of burning the country the way we do it, the information will get to any international government, especially Australian our government, and they'll put more dollars into traditional programs. Now, a lot of rangers came to our area and saw it, and learned how we've done it for the last ten years. And I'm sure the CALFA program is moving more in eastern. The project that we've done now, there's another ten million dollars in hand coming through for the fire management across the table of the northern areas. At the moment, people down in Western Australia will have that sort of program going, and hopefully we'll get more people from the eastern areas, from Ramingining, and further down this side probably. That's why we're sharing this information amongst our own people, and ways to make a business, to make it viable for funding to come through, not only Australian but other countries as well, putting money forward, apart from ConocoPhillips. So there are ways of making an industry for ourselves and getting funding and moving that money across the various areas of the northern region.

CD: Perhaps we'll have one final question I think, for time. Sorry, I think this person had their hand up first.

Audience member: Thank you very much for letting me speak, and for being here and to the Indigenous owners of this land. I just wanted to ask if there was any room in the communities, I'm really into food and seeing the connection between what we eat and how healthy our bodies are, with Indigenous health being one of the worst in the world at the moment. As you were saying, Grandfather, about eating fresh fish versus tinned food – is there any room in the communities, or is it happening, where people are collecting their Indigenous food and planting it around the homelands, so it's closer and supporting a larger population and are you open to having those sorts of projects happening in the homelands?

RG: I don't know which ones to answer! The first one, the government are cutting the homeland funds, I wanted to answer for that. Of course they want to cut the homeland, but one thing the government should know is about the basic health strategy, basic health. They will never walk away from that – that's their services, basic infrastructure. Roads, good roads, airport, providing basic health, that's their job as part of the Northern Territory pastoral care as a citizen of Australia. That's the one story. When we talk about the government cutting funds or the government not talking about it anymore, it's not interested...what you going to pass on to the children? What the story? This is the one, the story. Be on your land. Be independent, be healthy, develop your own money, and if you're not a professional on the fishing or another industry, art industry, stay there. That's the one that we're going to pass, the message. We got the knowledge to pass the message. Through the intervention...elders know, artists know, homeland people know that one. I think the Chairman wanted to answer some question over there.

DM: I just wanted to say something too. We are there in homelands, we are ready to develop our program or our jobs. But whenever we are ready to do, we hear the government say, 'we're not gonna help you, we'd like to bring you back to communities, mainstream.' But for us, we're not gonna let our country back there, not gonna leave our country.

[applause]

Whoever here, in the government's hands, tell the government, tell them we are not leaving our country. Bring our resources where we want it to build back there in our home community. We want to develop; we want to get jobs, in our own country. Thank you.

[applause]

DY: I'd like to add to what Djambawa and Richard said. Your question, ma'am, when we're talking about food and people's health, and our movement to the homeland, I think when we look at people who have been displaced, put somewhere else impacting other people's country as well. That's where sickness is coming from. People are dying in places where – urban areas – where the most exotic food, chemicals are around in that particular area – and people get sick. But when you're out in the homeland, it's different. It's alive, it's survival, it's a healthy country, with healthy people living in that particular country. Because around them it's environments. Cultural environments, people environments, animal environments, water environments. There's a book that has been written last year, from the School of Menzies [Health Research]. I was the co-author, about the health of Aboriginal people in the remote areas of Western Arnhem Land. Statistics found that people who living in the remote areas out in homelands are much healthier people than living in the community, in town. Because out there, we got two way of food. Hunting on our own ground, and we can get resources flown in, every now and again, but mostly it's traditional food that we have and that's what makes us healthy. And also country makes us healthy, what we see around us. But in the community - no. That's why people get sick. Our people are dying rapidly, years and years earlier, when people never died, because they were much healthier in those times. But now, we're losing our elders; we're losing our knowledge away. A lot of the senior traditional owners we got top knowledge – it's very good that knowledge. It's a shame, it's too late. But the way we're looking, the way we interpret – our home is the bush. That's where we got better life, better health situation out there. Thank you.

CD: So thank you very much to everybody who's spoken. It's a great honour for us all to be here listening to you today. I'd also like before we conclude to particularly acknowledge Freddie Timms for coming over from the Kimberley region and being the

one person on the panel from the Kimberley. But also to give a message and an apology from Mr. Tommy May, who was scheduled to come, and has some important culture business that came up at the last minute. He was bringing a big mob of dancers and they all had to stay back. But Tommy May is a long-term ANKAAA member; he's been with ANKAAA for twenty-one years in fact. He's a senior artist and the Chairman of KALACC, which is the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre. I was privileged to have some quite long conversations on the phone with Tommy and the managers in his office about how keen they were to come and talk with Northern Territory mob, and share some of their concerns. They don't use the word 'homeland' there; they talk about being 'on country,' 'community' on country. So thank you to Freddie for speaking from the Kimberley particularly.

[applause]

And finally I want to also particularly thank the ANKAAA Chairman, Djambawa Marawili, for being the inspiration that brought together the panel today.

[applause]

Transcribed from audio recording by Jessica Booth, ANKAAA.