

Media Release No.704

For immediate release

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY FORUM TO HELP LOCAL ARTISTS AND COMMUNITIES

Artists and cultural workers from across the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area came together to learn more about the protection of traditional Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property in a three-day forum hosted by the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA).

The forum, held on Thursday Island from 11 to 13 April, was the third annual Torres Strait Arts Industry Meeting presented by the TSRA's Culture, Art and Heritage (CAH) Programme and involved over 50 of the region's visual and performing artists and cultural leaders, and leading industry professionals in the field of intellectual property law.

The TSRA Chairperson, Mr Joseph Elu, said the forum's aim was to empower communities with a strong understanding of Australian intellectual property legislation and where gaps exist with traditional concepts of cultural ownership.

"Since the TSRA's CAH Programme was established in 2009, we have worked towards supporting our region's artists and cultural practitioners to contribute in a sustainable way towards the Torres Strait Islander arts industry," Mr Elu said.

"A vital part of this is promoting an understanding of intellectual property rights within our communities, and among consumers of Indigenous Australian art and culture."

Mr Elu said community empowerment and consumer education was vital in ensuring the protection and maintenance of Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal cultures into the future.

"Since 2014 the TSRA has committed formally through the Torres Strait Development Plan to support the protection of Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people's intellectual property rights, and this forum is an important way in which we are working towards achieving this goal," Mr Elu said.

The forum featured guest presenters who are leading professionals in the field of intellectual property law, including representatives from peak national bodies the Arts Law Centre of Australia, the Australia Council for the Arts, Arts Queensland, Viscopy| Copyright Council and leading Indigenous cultural property rights lawyer and advocate Terri Janke.

"Ms Janke has worked for many years with Indigenous communities and peak national and international bodies to raise awareness and develop policy recommendations and protocols to protect Indigenous cultural intellectual property rights," Mr Elu said.

"On behalf of the TSRA I thank all of the presenters and participants who made the forum a success."

For more information on the 2016 Torres Strait Arts Industry Meeting or the TSRA Culture, Art and Heritage Programme please contact TSRA Culture, Art and Heritage Programme Manager Mary Bani on 07 40 690 700.

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2016 Torres Strait Artist Forum participants and TSRA Portfolio Member for Culture, Art and Heritage Mr Aven Noah Snr.



2016 Torres Strait Artist Forum participants



Guest presenter, Terri Janke, Solicitor Director Terri Janke and Company Lawyers and Consultants



2016 Torres Strait Artist Forum participants, presenters and (centre) TSRA Chairperson, Joseph Elu, and TSRA Deputy-Chairperson and Portfolio Member for Culture, Art and Heritage, Mr Aven Noah
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