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ART AWARDS PRESENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR TORRES STRAIT ARTISTS

The rich and diverse art and craft of the Torres Strait is to take centre stage again this year as the Gab Titui Cultural Centre prepares for the 2012 Indigenous Art Award.

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), through its Culture, Art and Heritage Program strongly supports local artists and cultural practitioners.

The Gab Titui Indigenous Art Award is one important initiative that nurtures, assists and promotes talent in the region.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr John 'Toshie' Kris encouraged artists to enter artworks relating to this year's theme, *Native Title: Our Land and Sea Rights*.

"On the 20th anniversary of the Mabo decision the importance of recognising and celebrating Native Title in the Torres Strait has never been more evident.

"This theme creates an opportunity for artists to communicate to all audiences the importance of Native Title and our connections as traditional owners to the land and sea areas in the Torres Strait".

In its fifth year, the Award continues to foster the careers of many successful Torres Strait artists, including emerging artist, Taicee Pearson, who took out last year's award for Best Secondary Student Work and the People's Choice Award.

"Winning the People's Choice Award category was a big surprise," Taicee said.

"It meant a step forward to know that people did appreciate my work".

Taicee, who began creating lino prints at 13 when she was given a block of lino, graduated with a Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) from Djarragun College last year.

She is now studying towards a Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts and also works at Djumbunji Press in Cairns.

"I am in the studio working with experienced Torres Strait artists Brian Robinson, Billy Missi and Joel Sam..... it is awesome.

"They teach me different techniques, small techniques that really make a difference in my work."

In 2012, the Gab Titui Indigenous Art Award remains the only exhibition in the world to present a current and authentic representation of art and craft produced by Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal artists residing in the region.

"My history with Gab Titui has helped me to get a job and better skills development," Taicee said.

"Getting Highly Commended for my entry in grade eight in the 2009 Gab Titui Indigenous Art Award played a big role too.

“It lets people know that I can do what I do.”

Taicee has big plans for the future as well.

“I want to go to university to study a Masters in Printmaking.

“Then I want to go overseas travel the world and gain experience working in different places.”

To other young artists considering entering the Award in 2012, Taicee said: “good luck”.

“I would encourage them..... I would say that anything could happen,” said Taicee.

The 2012 entries will be judged by guest curator, Mr Tom Mosby, Executive Manager, Indigenous Research and Projects at the State Library of Queensland and will attract a total prize pool of \$10,000.

The Gab Titui Indigenous Art Award winner will receive \$5,000, the runner-up \$2,000 and the People’s Choice Award winner \$1,000.

Entries are invited from all Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal visual artists and craftspeople that live in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area and will be showcased at Gab Titui during opening night celebrations on 30 May.

To obtain an entry form for the 2012 Gab Titui Indigenous Art Award or more information, contact Diat Alferink, Torres Strait Arts Development Officer, on (07) 4069 0872. The closing date for entries is 5pm Friday, 11 May 2012.

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