

**ART GALLERY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA —
*DESERT RIVER SEA: PORTRAITS OF THE KIMBERLEY***

Statement by Minister for Culture and the Arts

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Minister for Culture and the Arts) [2.03 pm]: I would like to inform the house of the recent opening of a significant exhibition and cultural experience at the Art Gallery of Western Australia. *Desert River Sea: Portraits of the Kimberley* is the culmination of the ground-breaking, six-year visual arts initiative *Desert River Sea: Kimberley Art Then & Now*. Part of the 2019 Perth Festival, *Desert River Sea* is a landmark exhibition that brings to Perth the art, artists and culture of the Kimberley. It is the first exhibition in Australia for more than 20 years to celebrate the region's diverse art and culture. It brings together over 150 new and old works from six Kimberley art centres and three independent artists, the State Art Collection and private collections. Together, these works offer a rare experience of the land, artists and art of the Kimberley.

Aboriginal culture is core to Western Australia's unique cultural identity and an essential cultural learning experience for visitors to our state. The stories presented through the works in the exhibition are unique to Western Australia, helping to showcase the Kimberley region as one of our iconic tourism regions, and presenting our shared history and culture to local and international audiences. The public response to the opening of *Desert River Sea* has been very strong, with over 3 700 people attending the opening weekend activities.

The exhibition runs until 27 May 2019 and is part of the broader program, *Desert River Sea: Kimberley Art Then & Now*, which comprises three core components: research and documentation; profession training and development; and promotion of artistic practices through an online portal. As part of this program, the gallery has partnered with the Aboriginal Art Centre Hub Western Australia—AACHWA—to deliver an internship for six Aboriginal arts workers to gain hands-on installation experience at the *Desert River Sea* exhibition. The project also showcases an innovative partnership model between the gallery, the artists and art centres of the Kimberley, supported by Rio Tinto.

I am also delighted to inform the house that *Desert River Sea* will be one of the touring projects funded as part of the McGowan government's \$8 million regional exhibitions touring boost election commitment, which will enable more Western Australians to experience the state's collection. I congratulate the Art Gallery of Western Australia for programing this significant exhibition for all Western Australians to enjoy and I encourage members and their families to attend.