



THE HON PAUL FLETCHER MP
Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts

MEDIA RELEASE

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Digital Labelling to Promote Authenticity Trialled at Alice Springs Indigenous Art Fair ‘Desert Mob’

Digital labelling technology to authenticate art works by Indigenous artists is being trialled at this week’s Desert Mob Indigenous Art Fair organised by Desart in Alice Springs.

The trial, funded with \$150,000 provided by the Australian Government to Desart, the peak body for Australia’s central desert indigenous art centres, will be officially launched by Commonwealth Arts Minister Paul Fletcher at today’s Desert Mob opening event.

The technology aims to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and designers – and to help fight the problem of inauthentic art and products which all too often sees both artists and buyers ripped off.

Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, said the trial is using scannable QR codes to test how best to give buyers confidence that the products that they are purchasing have been made and sourced ethically.

“The quality and diversity of art work on display at Desert Mob is astounding – and highlights just how important it is to help buyers know when they are getting the real thing, and to help indigenous artists to get the fair returns they deserve for their work,” Minister Fletcher said.

“Sadly there have been imitators who copy indigenous style designs, mainly on cheap tourist merchandise. It is deeply offensive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; it is wrong; and it means both genuine artists, and people wanting to buy genuine indigenous art, are losing out.

“This technology is one way we can fight it. If art works can readily and authoritatively be shown to be authentic, that helps both artists and those wanting to buy art – and in turn helps build a bigger market for authentic, high quality indigenous Art.”

The three day Desert Mob event in Alice Springs showcases and celebrates artistic expression from some of the world’s oldest and richest living cultures and provides visitors the opportunity to source art from Aboriginal owned and operated art centres. The 2019 Desert Mob Exhibition, Symposium and marketplace will feature the work of 250 artists from 33 art centres, building on the 9000 visitors and \$1.1 million in sales at last year’s event.

The Government’s Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support program is contributing to the operations of 27 of the art centres participating in Desert Mob. In 2019-20, \$20.8 million is being provided through the program to support around 80 Indigenous art centres, fairs, service organisations and regional hubs across Australia. The funding supports 6000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait artists and over 300 arts workers, most in remote or very remote Indigenous communities.

For more information visit: <https://www.arts.gov.au/ivais> and <https://desart.com.au/desert-mob/>

Media contact: Minister Fletcher: Brad Hatch | 0448 162 679 | Brad.Hatch@communications.gov.au