



MEDIA RELEASE

Worldwide knowledge and understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures, past and present

13 November 2009

Indigenous Astronomy experts converge on Canberra

Ilgarijiri – things belonging to the sky exhibition launch

Indigenous Astronomy practitioners and experts will meet for the first time in Canberra on November 27 for a symposium that coincides with the launch of an original art exhibition by Aboriginal artists from the Mid-West region of Western Australia.

Hosted by AIATSIS in partnership with the CSIRO and the International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research (ICRAR), Curtin University of Technology, the Indigenous Astronomy Symposium will explore this rapidly growing field of research and Indigenous Knowledge.

"AIATSIS is proud to co-host the first national meeting of researchers and knowledge holders of Indigenous Astronomy and to be able to coincide it with the launch of such an impressive Indigenous art exhibition," AIATSIS Principal Russell Taylor said.

The art exhibition, *Ilgarijiri – things belonging to the sky*, is a joint project between ICRAR's Professor Steven Tingay and staff and artists of Yamaji Art, Geraldton. As part of International Year of Astronomy festivities, *Ilgarijiri* showcases and celebrates the unique culture of the traditional owners of the land on which Australian scientists hope the next generation radio telescope — the Square Kilometre Array — will be built.

"I think it is important that all Australians get to know and recognise these aspects of Indigenous culture, the strong connections to the sky and the wonderful stories describing those connections," said Professor Tingay, a Premier's Research Fellow and Deputy Director of the International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research.

The year 2009 is the 400th anniversary of Galileo turning a telescope to the sky. To mark this, the International Year of Astronomy 2009 is a year-long, community-based celebration of the science, history and cultural impact of astronomy for people throughout the world, and a celebration of the night sky as the common heritage of humanity.

"Much has been written about the astronomy of Native Americans, and of the builders of Stonehenge in Britain. But we don't hear very much about the astronomy of Indigenous Australians," symposium Program Coordinator, Professor Ray Norris said.

"Yet Indigenous Australians have at least 50,000 year-old cultures with strong astronomical threads, and they may be the world's first astronomers."

For more information on the *Ilgarijiri* exhibition, visit <http://ilgarijiri.wordpress.com> or for details of the symposium visit <http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/events/ilgarijiri.html>

Media contacts: AIATSIS:

Chris Ryan, AIATSIS Communications m: 0408 688 026 or chris.ryan@aiatsis.gov.au ;

Curtin University: Professor Steve Tingay; Professor of Radio Astronomy m: 0425 771 856;

s.tingay@curtin.edu.au OR **Tracy Peacock**, Media Coordinator, Curtin ph: 08 9266 1931

T.Peacock@curtin.edu.au m: 0401 103 755; or

Australia Telescope National Facility: Helen Sim ph: 02 9372 4251 or Helen.Sim@csiro.au