



PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

Exhibit 6

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Videos.](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Indigenous_Affairs/The_growing_presence_of_inauthentic_Aboriginal_and_Torres_Strait_Islander_style_art_and_craft/Videos)

**Bec Mac:** Hi, Bec Mac here again for the Fake Art Harms campaign. I'm in this amazing, beautiful gallery with an incredible gallerist, Ian Plunkett, at the Japingka gallery here in Fremantle. How are you?

**Ian Plunkett:** Great, thank you.

**Bec Mac:** You've got some beautiful work here. Can you quickly talk us through this amazing piece. It's by?

**Ian Plunkett:** Tarrise King. She's a Gurindji artist from around Katherine in the Northern Territory. This is an aerial view of a pink salt lake that's near Katherine. In fact, she says whenever she sees these salt lakes she knows that she's nearly home. So you've got the pink salt; you've got the lines running through the country, as if you're flying over the country at about 2,000 metres and looking down on the land.

**Bec Mac:** It is absolutely stunning. It's so beautiful. Just quickly while I've got you chatting, this one—I've got to just say it's not very great language to use—is a little bit out of control! Can you talk us through this painting?

**Ian Plunkett:** This is by one of my favourite artists. This is Sarrita King, Tarrise's younger sister. She's just 28 and has already had major exhibitions in Paris and Berlin. This is her ancestors painting. Just to look at it says it all. Again it's an aerial view, but it's to do with the spirits of the ancestors and the land.

**Bec Mac:** The detail and the depth—I've never seen anything like it, actually.

**Ian Plunkett:** No. She is an amazing artist. She's just been recognised by Samsung television. They are using her paintings—the only Australian artist—for their new 'art series' televisions.

**Bec Mac:** We're here to talk about the Fake Art Harms campaign. You were part of the initial law code that was being set up to, I guess, protect Indigenous artists. Can you talk us through how that started?

**Ian Plunkett:** It initially started—I was a board member of the Indigenous Art Code and, along with Arts Law, they were hearing from artists about their concerns about art being appropriated and put on cheap, nasty products being imported from overseas. Sometimes they were sacred stories that were being used. This straightaway raised a real concern with all of us, because it's cultural theft, really. There's no excuse for it, just to make cheap souvenirs—not for any reason, really. That really upset us. I guess my main concern personally with the way it's being called is that they are calling it fake art—well, it's not so much that, because there's very little fake art in Indigenous culture. It's really about fake souvenirs, and they are the real problem. We're getting these cheap, nasty things brought in from China and Indonesia that really pay no respect to the culture which they steal from—none whatsoever.

**Bec Mac:** Do you just want to qualify what that actually means—fake art—and really focus on the souvenir aspect of it. Coming into, say, a parliamentary inquiry around making a law, this is what you feel is the most crucial thing?

**Ian Plunkett:** Without doubt. You can see the art around you here, and I've been working with Indigenous artists for over 30 years. Certainly fake art is not a big problem in Indigenous culture. There's a lot more fake art in Western art—we all know that. But it is these cheap and nasty fake souvenirs that are being brought into the country in bulk. We have to also remember that it's not just Indigenous people that need to make the pieces; it's that they have to approve it and get a royalty whenever their designs are used. Sometimes their designs are being used and they're not even being acknowledged, let alone paid a royalty. So that, again, is theft. So what we're saying is that many artists actually make a good living from licensing their designs to be used by proper manufacturers, overseas and Australian, so that goes to things like all sorts of products, not just souvenirs. So you get them on ties, on silk scarves, beautiful clothing. But, in each of those cases, the artist receives a royalty, and that's the main thing.

**Bec Mac:** And you want to be careful that that doesn't change, and that's part of what they're discussing, isn't it—that that might stop?

**Ian Plunkett:** Yes. You can't harm that industry, because it's a growth industry and it's one of the main forms of income for many Indigenous artists. They approve all these designs, so they know they are culturally sensitive, they know what they are approving, they're not letting anything sacred be used out there, and they approve colourways et cetera, so they have control over how their designs are used. But, if their work's being ripped off, they have no say whatsoever and they don't get any compensation either.

**Bec Mac:** What can we do more to promote and to support the creation of genuine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural products?

**Ian Plunkett:** I think, for a start, if you're going to be out there buying souvenirs, especially art, always look to buy from a member of a recognised organisation like the Indigenous Art Code of Australia or the Aboriginal Art Association of Australia. You'll see their logos on the door. Those people have signed a code of ethics, and they have to guarantee and be transparent in everything they do. So there should be a paper trail to the artist, and you can buy with confidence from those people because they are subject to proper high ethical standards.

**Bec Mac:** As a community, that would be a really great thing—we can take responsibility as consumers in a way. What else can we do as a community to stop the proliferation of fake art?

**Ian Plunkett:** Don't be afraid to ask questions: how much does the artist get for this? Does the artist get a royalty for this? Where is this product made? It doesn't matter if it is made overseas if it's made legitimately and the artist receives a royalty, but ask questions; don't be afraid to. You're not necessarily going to get something cheaper by buying something imported. But, at least this way, you know the artist will be getting a return for their work. It's really important just to ask questions. Don't be afraid. All good retailers and galleries are happy to answer these questions.

**Bec Mac:** Thank you very much. This gallery is fantastic. You should come down here to Fremantle. Thank you.