

Committee Secretary

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs

P.O. Box 6021

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

3/11/17

Dear Secretary,

I am grateful that there is an inquiry into the proliferation of inauthentic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander style art and thank you for the opportunity to participate.

Regrettably the terms of reference don't address the real issues concerning the protection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their land, their cultural and ceremonial rites and rights to the extent that is needed.

The notion of cultural inheritance and custodianship being expressed and considered in modern terms such as intellectual property and copyright highlights the juxtaposition of ancient and modern.

The classification of Indigenous art and the definition of *authentic/inauthentic* needs much consideration. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art is as varied as it's languages, countries and peoples. It is not generic in a *style*.

Please consider the following concepts.

Authentic Traditional art – Rock art and artefacts, music, dance, story that embodies Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditions, culture and knowledge. This is work made as a continuation of cultural practices and traditions. The artist is the custodian of the story, not the author.

Authentic Contemporary Indigenous art also known as Contemporary Aboriginal Australian art – Modern art work that is produced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It explores modern themes and materials. It may reference traditional cultural concepts. It is often made for the commercial art market.

Souvenir Art Ethical– Products that are made for the mass market with royalties/commissions paid to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artist.

Souvenir – Products that are made for the mass market with little involvement of Indigenous people.

The commodification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art.

Product range available with reproduction Indigenous art. Mostly made in China, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India.

Sunglass cases, luggage tags, book marks. Tea and coffee cups and T pots. Cutlery, salt and pepper shakers, bottle stoppers, drink bottles and stubbie coolers. Table clothes, runners, napkins, coasters and cushion covers. Backpacks, shopping and tote bags. Scarves, sarongs, caftans, ties, socks and hats. Fridge magnets, bottle openers and keyrings. Note pads, books, wrapping paper, playing cards, calendars, diaries and writing sets. T shirts, adults, ladies and children. Caps, hats, thongs, umbrellas and raincoats. Active wear. Pan flutes, djembe drums, bamboo flutes and whistles. Printed canvas.

None of these products are cultural nor are traditional in form. Many of these products are unable to be produced in Australia due to lack of industry.

A solution to the issue of importation would be to help develop the growth of local industry, especially indigenous owned/managed production.

There is a market for these products. The souvenir industry, which interestingly has been around longer than the Contemporary art industry.

Cultural artefacts such as Boomerang, Bullroarer, Clapstick and Didgeridoo/yidaki are available both Imported and made locally.

It seems right that these items should be made in Australia as we have the ingredients/materials, knowhow and they are culturally significant artefacts.

Recommendations of ways to help address the proliferation of inauthentic product.

More Indigenous ownership and involvement in the local production and sales of art and merchandise. Provide alternative product.

Educate the souvenir industry as to ethical standards and concepts. This will help businesses, consumers and artists choose and make quality products.

Introduce a Labelling System that honestly describes product and merchandise, the materials used, where it was made and by whom. This will help identify

work made for the Souvenir Industry and help qualify what is Contemporary art.

Increase indigenous ownership of souvenir and art retail. This is an opportunity to present culture and product to the domestic and international markets.

Buy direct from the artist and community campaign. Help develop and support Arts hubs and regional art centres. Encourage art buyers to visit and purchase from the artist/makers. This will encourage tourism and commerce in remote areas and give independence to the artists.

Continue to support the Indigenous Art Fairs that are ethical and very successful.

Have sister galleries in urban settings that act as representatives for the regional centres to help cater to the market that is unable to access the artists and communities directly.

Establish an Aboriginal Artist Register. For this to happen a discussion needs to be had about some very controversial and emotive issues. Who is considered to be indigenous and what defines an Aboriginal artist?

In conclusion, of the thousands of souvenir retail stores in Queensland, there are only a handful that are owned and managed by Australians. Of these I know of only one that is run by an Indigenous owner. I am proud to be that one.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider my submission.

Sincerely,

Abigail Chaloupka