



An Australian Government Initiative

## **ARTBANK EXPLORES *DARKNESS ON THE EDGE OF TOWN***

**Curated by Clothilde Bullen**

**18 August – 12 November 2016, Artbank Sydney**

**For immediate release – May, 2016**

This August, Artbank collaborates with West Australian curator Clothilde Bullen on an exhibition at Artbank in Sydney: *Darkness on the Edge of Town*. Drawing largely from Artbank's significant collection of Indigenous Australian art, Clothilde's curatorial narrative explores themes of racism, dispossession and the role of art in Indigenous communities.

Clothilde Bullen is a Wardandi (Nyoongar)/ Bibbulmun Indigenous woman who previously held the position of Curator of Indigenous Art at the Art Gallery of Western Australia. She has curated thirteen exhibitions, led the acquisition of a series of significant artworks for the State Art Collection (WA) and is one of the leading voices on the contemporary Indigenous art scene.

Clothilde has drawn together works from the Artbank collection, to create a discourse around contemporary art created by Indigenous Australian artists being viewed as a persuasive tool for change. Clothilde's view is that Indigenous art can take a powerful stance as it relates to the idea that Aboriginal voices and black lives matter. Her exhibition lends clarity to this concept by displaying works by artists whose narrative is characterised by a sense of unapologetically 'standing in their own truth'.

Says Clothilde of her exhibition: "Movements led by the marginalised and dispossessed of western countries – in this case Indigenous Australian people – have at their core a sense of being unheard, unseen, of speaking a different language to their oppressors. Art in these cases transcends language and provides a bridge of communication between the two groups. Indigenous Australian lives have been irrevocably affected by the colonial history of this country, but conversely have had a profound effect upon the awareness, appreciation and understanding of who we are as a nation. This exhibition seeks to make that awareness conscious, to challenge the viewer to consider the lives and concerns of the artists and by extension all Indigenous Australians."

Says Tony Stephens: “We are immensely proud to be working with Clothilde Bullen on this exhibition. Clothilde has a unique approach that presents complex ideas in such a way that also makes them accessible. The colonial history of our country is for all Australian’s to know and understand. For this exhibition, Clothilde has mined the depth of the Artbank collection to create a narrative that both spans time and place and is a must see for every Australian.”

The exhibition features works by some of the most important Indigenous contemporary artists in Australia today: *Balga Resin* (2008) by Christopher Pease; *What are you saying* (2007) by Clinton Nain, *Agula in the Antbed* (2006) by GILGI, *God is on our side* (1991) by Karen Casey and *Borun Inside My Brain* (1998) by Lesley Murray.

*Darkness on the Edge of Town* is open to the public and may be viewed at Artbank Sydney, 222 Young Street, Waterloo, Tuesday to Saturday 10.00am to 5.00pm. Visit the Artbank website for details of special showings and performances: [artbank.gov.au/exhibitions](http://artbank.gov.au/exhibitions)

For further information about *Darkness on the Edge of Town* and Artbank, please contact:

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### **About Artbank**

For over 35 years, Artbank has been at the forefront of the Australian contemporary art sector. Established in 1980 as a federal government support program, Artbank provides direct support to Australian contemporary artists through the acquisition of their work and promotes the value of Australian contemporary art to the broader public. Artbank funds its operations through a unique leasing programme; working with individuals, companies, governments and embassies in over seventy countries across the globe. With approximately 10,000 works by over 3,000 artists, Artbank holds one of the largest collections of Australian contemporary art in the world, which includes some of the best examples of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artwork produced over the past four decades. As the largest collector of Australian art in the country, Artbank’s support for artists is often applied early in their careers, with further acquisitions made at regular intervals to form an extensive and constantly evolving collection of Australian contemporary art.

### **About Clothilde Bullen**

Clothilde Bullen is a Wardandi (Nyoongar)/ Bibbulmun Indigenous woman whose family links tie her to Collie and Bunbury in Western Australia. She held the position of Curator of Indigenous Art at the Art Gallery of Western Australia curating 13 exhibitions during her time there, writing numerous in-house catalogues and acquiring significant artworks for the State Art Collection. Clothilde also writes for external publications, including *Artlink: Contemporary Art of Asia and the Asia Pacific*, and has conducted many lectures and talks, most recently as part of Next Wave Festival's Blak Wave programme. Clothilde currently sits on the University of Western Australia's Cultural Collections Committee, and has been a board member of Yirra Yaakin Theatre, committee member on the National Indigenous Advisory Reference Group, through the Australia Council and the Wesfarmers Indigenous Advisory Committee, amongst others. Clothilde is a strong advocate for the Nyoongar and wider visual arts communities, seeking to empower arts workers in the visual arts industry, by being aware, responsive, inspirational and knowledgeable. Clothilde has also served on the development committee for the National Gallery and Wesfarmers Indigenous Arts Fellowship and was part of the national Indigenous curatorial lobby group to the Kemp Inquiry to introduce legislation for resale royalties for Indigenous artists.