

The Department of State & Regional Development's Aboriginal Business Link Program is proving a boon for Aboriginal creative industries development in regional New South Wales.

Four visual artists in particular – Johanna Parker, Paul Taylor, Gail Naden and Warren Mason – have all built viable cultural micro-enterprises as a result of their participation in two projects: the **Biamie Dreaming Cooperative**



and **Garrawal Arts.**
by MERRYN SPENCER

the
face
on the
front

14

NEW SOUTH WALES ATTRACTS THE LARGEST NUMBER OF DOMESTIC and overseas visitors who participate in Indigenous tourism activities¹, and artists in the Orana Arts, Outback Arts and Arts OutWest regions (from Lithgow to Lightning Ridge, Gilgandra to Bourke) are well-placed to capitalise on these cultural business opportunities.

The Department of State & Regional Development (DSRD) Aboriginal Business Development Manager, Roxanne Smith, has 175 clients in an area that stretches from the Blue Mountains across to Broken Hill, with over 50% specialising in creative industries. Roxanne works to assist business people to develop their products and access new markets. She sees the benefit of flourishing creative industries in the positive impact it has on the quality of life in regional and rural communities. The result is increased confidence in production of visual culture, quality artwork and sound business practice.

Aboriginal artists who are commercially successful contribute positively to their communities and this reflects positively on the region. As Roxanne says, "I see my work as a way to help stop the 'cycle of failure.' I see this potential to grow and develop."

Murriwarri artist Johanna Parker agrees her work has power to encourage others. "I hope that people get out and get more involved in art workshops, art prizes; try and be more confident; get out there and start businesses. I try and show people in Lightning Ridge and tell them what I'm doing to get them motivated."

Being commercially viable provides a platform to promote artists' work. "Not only does it give people the opportunity for economic development, it's the individual building of confidence in artistic ability," says Roxanne. "They are starting to get their names out there. People are starting to take more of an interest."

Johanna Parker had assistance in the establishment of her business, Murriwarri Artworks, including a website and plans to open a gallery in the future. Johanna has successfully exhibited in Millthorpe, Bourke, Grafton, Port Macquarie and Sydney and is currently working on two Murriwarri children's books with Christine Hooper at Charles Sturt University in Darwin. Her works have a strong design element signifying her spiritual bond with the land.

Artistic ability grows, as Roxanne says, "It's the artists themselves — all of them have done really well. They have been consistent with their work, dedicating the time and producing great work."

Wiradjuri artist Paul Taylor, who is based in Geurie, says his work with Roxanne has opened up further opportunities for him and support of his practice. Paul produces contemporary abstract paintings in oils and gouache, drawing inspiration from the environment, the land and stories from the past. He has a solo exhibition planned at Orange Regional Gallery later this year and is also working as an arts tutor in Primary schools and in justice centres in the Dubbo region.

Roxanne emphasises that artists being able to tell their stories and maintain a sense of pride is essential to building confident and

May

5 May – 3 June

Verve An exhibition of new works from the Fine Art staff at the University of Newcastle. **TAMWORTH** Regional Gallery Tel 02 6767 5459 Website www.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/gallery

5 May – 1 July

Dream On Focusing on the 1950's - 1970's, when lifestyle and culture dramatically changed. **TAMWORTH** Regional Gallery Tel 02 6767 5459 Website www.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/gallery

Until 6 May

Tomorrow Land Callum Morton projects his futuristic vision of architectural styles. **DUBBO** Regional Gallery Tel 02 6801 4444 Website www.wpcddubbo.org.au

Until 6 May

Peter Wilson: 30 Years on Survey of the Bathurst-based ceramic artist's career. **BATHURST** Regional Art Gallery Tel 02 6333 6555



Gail Naden displays her work at the Sydney Aboriginal and Oceanic Art Fair

sustainable business practice. Alongside practical advice on tax, BAS statements and creating business plans, the DSRD program provides opportunities to attend expos, assistance with reproduction and merchandising and further training.

In November 2006 Gail, Johanna, Paul and Warren all featured at the Sydney Aboriginal and Oceanic Art Fair and negotiations are currently underway for a show in Melbourne; exhibitions at both a commercial gallery and the newly opened Musée du Quai Branly in Paris as well as in other locations in China and even Saudi Arabia.

Merchandising, Roxanne believes, is a tool which “puts an Aboriginal face to the Western NSW front.” This is done through the production of postcards, bags, doona covers, t-shirts, mugs and other items.

Wiradjuri/Gamilaraay artist, Gail Naden, completed the accredited Tourism Certification Program ‘Respecting Our Culture’ at the 2007 Business Development Symposium, run by the DSRD, as a representative of Biamie Dreaming. Gail told me the week was invaluable. “This was a wonderful opportunity to learn more about business development — the professional aspects of it, plus networking with like-minded people and to see what other Aboriginal businesses are doing.”

Twice short-listed for the Parliament of NSW Indigenous Art Prize, Gail describes her work as “portraying the beauty of the land through ochre and contemporary colours, mediums and forms.” With a strong background in graphic design, Gail’s work combines

structured and organic designs as it reflects the landscape and “delivers a sense of place and space in an exposed, controlled, man-made environment.”

With help of the DSRD, Gail and other regional artists like her are successfully combining their creativity and their businesses — maintaining the quality of their artistic output as an essential part of their developing, sustainable, business practices. Combine this with living in a regional area, and I’m sure they will all tell you it is a pretty satisfying lifestyle choice!

Programs like the DSRD’s Aboriginal Business Link are helping to both sustain and encourage future entrepreneurs, and promote the diverse cultural practices of western New South Wales. ■

1. Tourism Research Australia: Indigenous Tourism in Australia (2005)

Merryn Spencer is the Project & Promotions Officer at Orana Arts

WEBSITES

Department of State & Regional Development — Aboriginal Business Development www.aboriginalbiz.nsw.gov.au
Orana Arts www.oranaarts.com
Murriwarri Artworks www.murriwarriartworks.com
Sydney Aboriginal & Oceanic Art Fair www.saoaf.com.au
Aboriginal Tourism Association
www.aboriginaltourism.com.au
Tourism Research Association www.tra.australia.com

May

Until 6 May

👁️ *Joanna Logue: Glimpse* New works, including video and paintings inspired by the Oberon countryside. **BATHURST** Regional Art Gallery Tel 02 6333 6555

8 – 9 May

🎭 *Phobia* A fascinating blend of music, drama and physical theatre. \$15 - \$40 **LISMORE** City Hall Tel 02 6622 0300 **NORPA** Website www.norpa.org.au

8 – 13 May

🎭 *The Messiah* A hilarious, highly acclaimed rendition of the nativity story. \$45/\$36 **IPAC, WOLLONGONG** Tel 02 4226 3366 Website www.ipac.org.au

11 – 19 May

🎭 *Long Gone Lonesome Cowgirls* A musical play set in a small Australian outback town in the not-so-swinging sixties. **Riverina Playhouse, WAGGA WAGGA** Tel 02 6926 9688