

# MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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## New Riawunna Art Gallery to showcase Aboriginal art

Riawunna Centre at the UTAS Newnham Campus in Launceston will be home to the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art gallery in northern Tasmania following its official launch on **Thursday, December 12 at 6pm.**

Riawunna is committed to the advancement of knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and societies and to the promotion of cross-cultural understandings, as well as to providing a prominent place within the University for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values, traditions and discourses.

Through its Murina program it offers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students an introduction to university, familiarisation with course and subject options, an opportunity to develop academic skills, the chance to study a wide range of subjects and provide a source of ongoing friendship, cultural, academic and social support.

The gallery is expected to provide another avenue for education and promotion for the pathway program and Murina program art tutor and gallery curator Brigitte Wolfe is thrilled that the school now has a quality exhibition space for students and also established Tasmanian artists.

She said she is proud of the quality of work her students produce, and feels they deserve public appreciation.

“To see their artwork alongside that of prominent Aboriginal artists Vicki West and Bill Stackhouse, who will both be guest exhibitors in the new year, will be inspirational and very exciting for everyone involved,” she said.

“And during NAIDOC Week the exhibition will be curated by living national treasure and Aboriginal Elder Aunty Lola Greeno.”

“Visitors to the gallery will be able to see the best work from artists of all skill levels and explore the way they express themselves through a diverse range of mediums.

“And it will be the strong leadership and mentor program underpinning the operation of the gallery that will also benefit students here.”

The formal launch of the Riawunna Art Gallery will feature the work of Murina students, music from local Aboriginal community members and will be officially opened by Attorney General Brian Wightman.

Rhyanna Maynard of Rocherlea has been helping get the gallery space ready, and will have some of her contemporary photography included in the first exhibition.

The 21-year-old has been a Murina student for two years, completing courses in law, computer skills and taking part in winter and spring schools in art.

“I’ve tried several things, from childcare to hospitality, but art is what I really enjoy, and I’ve enrolled in a UTAS bachelor of art degree next year in the hope of working in the arts in the future.

“It will definitely be nice to have people look at our artwork.”

Kelly Smith is a 37-year-old mum from Ravenswood who also hopes to work in the art field one day, and is particularly interested in the establishment and running of art galleries and helping more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders express themselves through art.

In her second year with the Murina program she is developing a contemporary style, often using ink on canvas, to express her Aboriginal heritage and feelings in her nature-inspired images of flora and fauna.

The Riawunna Art Gallery will be open from 9am to 5pm daily and will operate with an advisory committee consisting of Aboriginal Elders and art workers (Aunty Lola Greeno, Aunty Phyllis Pitchford, Damien Quillum, Uncle Murray Everett and Clair Anderson).

### **Riawunna Art Gallery launch**

**When:** December 12, 6pm for 6.30pm

**Where:** Riawunna Centre, Newnham Drive, UTAS Newnham Campus.

**Who:** Staff, students and official opening by Attorney General Brian Wightman. Student artwork, music, light refreshments and

**For more information:** Murina art tutor Brigitte Wolfe 0418 372 287 or email: bcjwolfe@utas.edu.au

**Media opportunity:** To organise interviews with Brigitte Wolfe or the art students, please contact UTAS media officer Lana Best on 6324 5019 or 0417 978 025.

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