



Songlines

TRACKING THE *Seven Sisters*

A triumph ... that the world deserves to see.

Paul Daley, *The Guardian*

AN INTERNATIONAL TOURING EXHIBITION PRODUCED BY THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA



Acknowledgements

Aṅangu Pitjantjatjara
Yankunytjatjara (APY)
elders and supporters
Ngaanyatjarra elders
and supporters
Martu elders and supporters

Alive with the Dreaming! Songlines of the Western Desert partners

Australian Research Council
Australian National University
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Yankunytjatjara Women's Council
National Museum of Australia
The Australian Government
and the Department of the
Prime Minister and Cabinet
University of New England
(collaborating organisation)

Art centres

Ernabella Arts
Martumili Artists
Maṛuku Arts
Minyma Kutjara Arts Project
Ninuku Arts
Papulankutja Artists
Spinifex Arts Project
Tjanpi Desert Weavers
Tjungu Palya Artists
Warakurna Artists
Warburton Arts Project

DomeLab

Travelling Kungkarangkalpa is a digital immersive experience staged in DomeLab, a collaboration between the University of New South Wales and the National Museum of Australia, together with nine other tertiary and cultural organisations. It is funded as part of an Australian Research Council LIEF grant (2015) led by chief investigator Professor Sarah Kenderdine.

(cover) montage photographs by Sarah Kenderdine, Peter Morse and Paul Bourke; Seven Sisters rock art with permission of Walinynga (Cave Hill) traditional owners. (this page) Mary Katatjuku Pan dances solo at the Seven Sisters *inma* workshop at Balfour's Well, 2012. Photo: Wayne Quilliam, 'Songlines of the Western Desert' ARC project. (back cover) Walinynga (Cave Hill) rock art. Photo: June Ross, University of New England

Songlines

TRACKING THE *Seven Sisters*

[Seven Sisters] is not just one songline — they travelled all around Australia. And even other people overseas know the Seven Sisters story in their own way, so it's a special story. It's not only happening here in Australia but it happened everywhere else.

Ngalangka Nola Taylor with Kumpaya Girgirba, 2017

An ancient creation saga featuring a dramatic chase across the Australian deserts is at the heart of this groundbreaking exhibition.

Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters is compelling in scale and complexity, conveying an Indigenous founding narrative by using Indigenous ways of passing on knowledge. It is rich with Aboriginal voices and tangible expressions of the songlines — featuring more than 100 paintings, sculptures and ceramics, as well as state-of-the-art multimedia.

The artworks in this drama are portals to the deserts of the Martu, the Ngaanyatjarra and the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara peoples, through which visitors step to journey in the footsteps of the Seven Sisters.



This is not an art exhibition, a history exhibition or a science exhibition. It is all of these. It is both an Australian Aboriginal exhibition and a universal story of mankind. It offers us connectivity to each other and our planet in a fragmenting world. It is profound!

Margo Neale, Senior Indigenous Curator

Kungkarangkalpa — Seven Sisters, 2015, by Tjungkara Ken, Yaritji Young, Marinka Tunkin, Freda Brady and Sandra Ken, Tjala Arts, acrylic on canvas, National Museum of Australia, © the artists / Copyright Agency, 2018

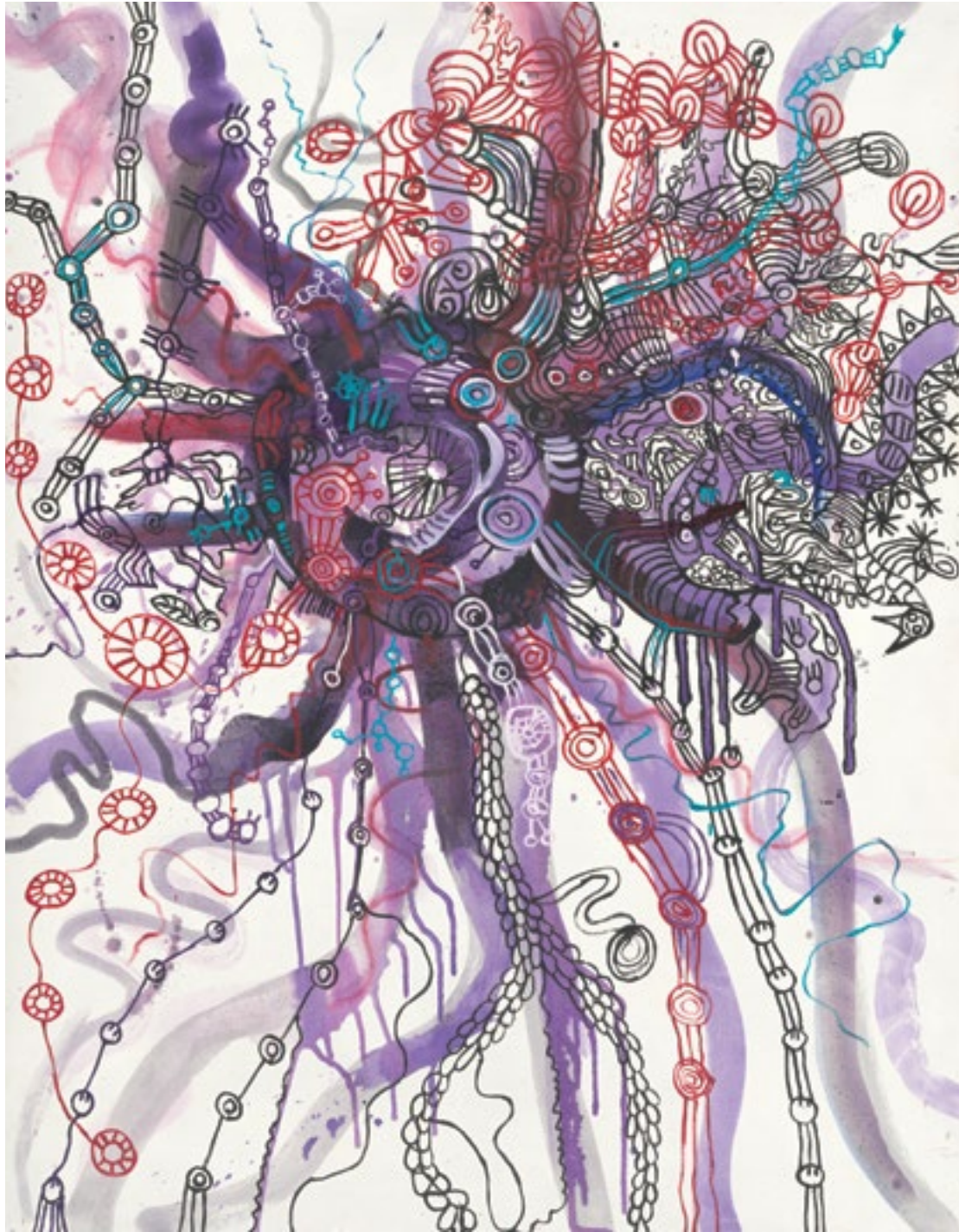
What are songlines?

Like the epic poems of the great oral traditions of the world, songlines are a way of holding and passing on knowledge. They contain protocols of behaviour and information for survival in an unpredictable and volatile environment — where food and water can be found, how to manage these scarce resources, where there is potential risk, and how to minimise that risk. By embedding this knowledge in a story, and performing it in dance and song, an

entire continent has been mapped by and for its people.

Songlines, or Dreaming tracks, map the routes and activities of Ancestral beings as they travelled across Australia. Custodianship of the stories, involving rights, responsibilities, gender, kinship and relationship to country, are layered into the cultural aspects of the experience. It is a knowledge system that is as ancient as the land itself.





Seven Sisters, 2016, by Yaritji Young, Tjala Arts, acrylic on linen, National Museum of Australia, © the artist / Copyright Agency, 2018

The songlines of the women of central Australia are also the heritage of non-Aboriginal Australians. It is this culture that is the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Australia. It is these mythic stories that are Australia's Book of Genesis.

Noel Pearson, *A Rightful Place*, 2014

The exhibition

Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters is highly immersive and experiential, where visitors journey along the Ancestral routes of the sisters as they flee across deserts, pursued relentlessly by a lusty sorcerer known as Nyiru or Yurla. This is an epic tale of tragedy and comedy, obsession and trickery, desire and

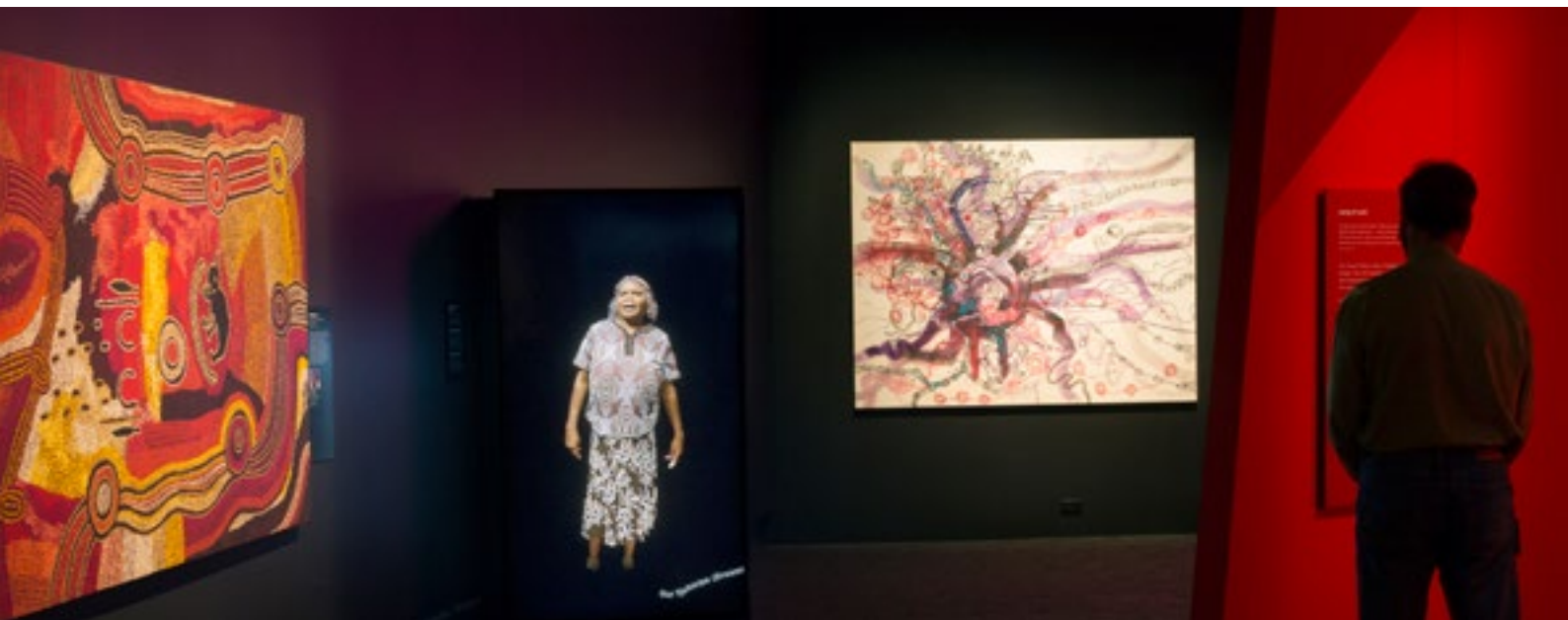
loss, solidarity and sorrow — a universal drama played out in the night sky by Orion and the Pleiades, and a terrestrial creation story in which the land has a starring role.

The exhibition aims to preserve the Seven Sisters story for its future custodians, and for the enrichment of Australia and the world.

A Jukurrpa [Dreaming] is one particular line, one pathway. When you follow that journey you'll see where they [the sisters] left behind parts of their stories. You gotta follow their footprints. You can see parts of the story in the land.

Ngalangka Nola Taylor with Kumpaya Girgirba, 2017

'Virtual elder' Alison Milyika Carroll, with *Tjitji Kutjara*, 2011, by Alison Munti Riley, Tjala Arts (left), and *Seven Sisters*, 2016, by Yaritji Young, Tjala Arts (right). Photo: George Serras, National Museum of Australia. All artworks © the artists / Copyright Agency, 2018



The objects

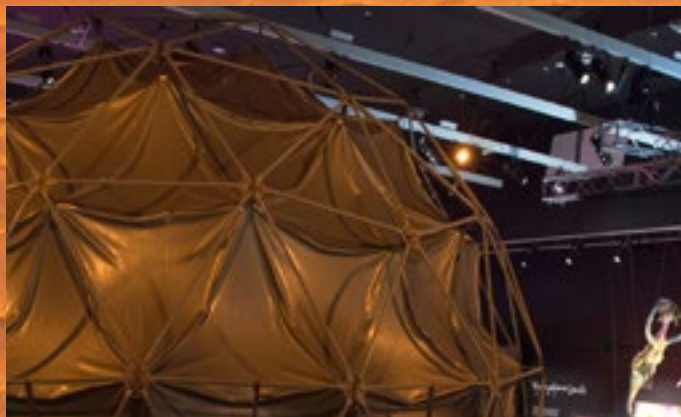
In retelling the Seven Sisters story, the Central and Western deserts are mapped across the exhibition gallery and populated with a stunning collection of artworks, many created especially for the exhibition.



(above) *Kungkarangkalpa (Seven Sisters)* ceramics: *Iji (Native Fig)* by Fiona Wells, *Wayanu (Quandong)* by Tjimpuna Williams, *Inma Walka (Ceremonial Designs)* by Alison Milyika Carroll, Ernabella Arts, glazed stoneware with underglaze, National Museum of Australia. (below) Snake sculptures and *kurlata (spears)* by artists from Maruku Arts displayed in the Wati Nyiru Room. Photo: George Serras, National Museum of Australia. All artworks © the artists / Copyright Agency, 2018



Just like the old people, we are dreaming.
We have a new dream with technology.
We're using the newest technology with the oldest culture.
Curtis Taylor, 2010



(background) Satellite image of Martu country, 2017. Google Earth - Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe and Image © 2017 CNES/Airbus. (inset) The Dome in the *Songlines* exhibition space. Photo: George Serras, National Museum of Australia



The Dome

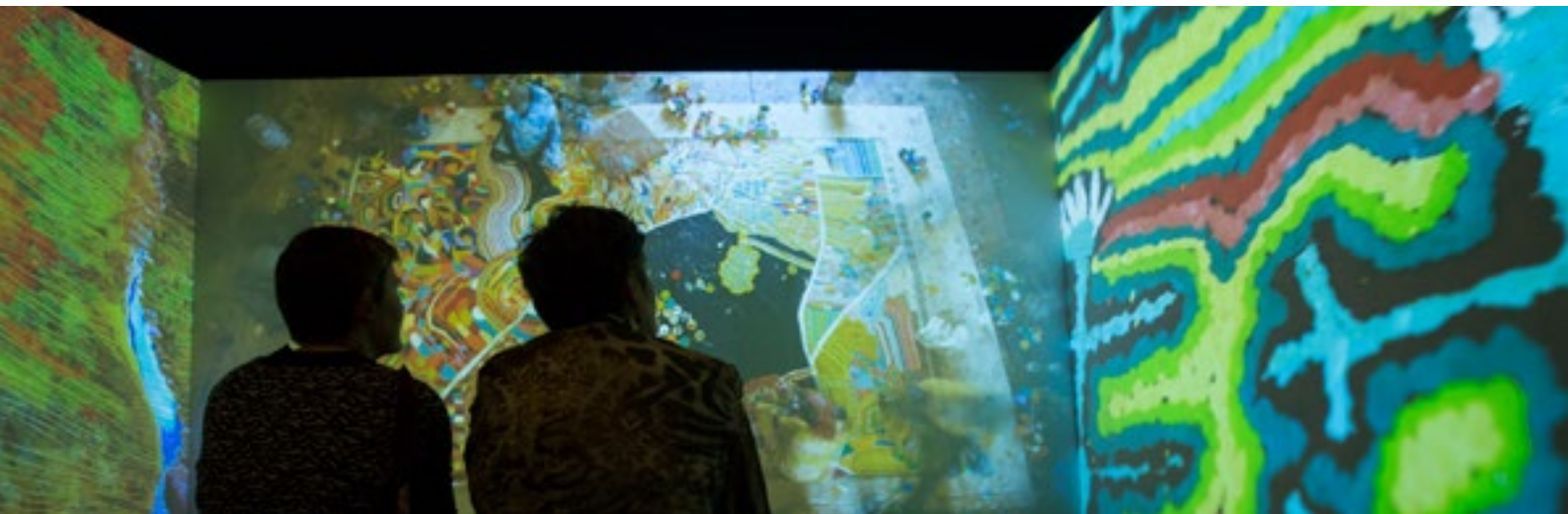
The multimedia DomeLab experience is shown in the world's first high-resolution travelling dome. It transports visitors to Walinynga (Cave Hill), the only known rock art site depicting the Seven Sisters story.

Accompanied by the voice of traditional owner Stanley Douglas, visitors will stand beneath the remarkable images captured

using high-definition cameras and transformed into a cinematic and immersive storytelling experience, *Travelling Kungkarangkalpa*.

Also featured in the Dome are animated artworks, such as the three dimensional *tjanpi* (grass) figures of the Seven Sisters which soar through the skies, and the transit of Orion and Pleiades.

Viewing *Travelling Kungkarangkalpa*, 2017, in the Dome.
Photo: Sarah Kenderdine, UNSW. Artwork © the artists /
Copyright Agency, 2018



LYNETTE WALLWORTH INSTALLATION

Lynette Wallworth is an Emmy Award-winning filmmaker and artist who uses immersive environments and interactive narratives to explore the connections between people and the natural world. Her installation, *Always Walking Country: Parnngurr Yarrkalpa*, recreates the desert in which the majestic *Yarrkalpa (Hunting Ground)* painting — a highlight of the exhibition — was created.

This encyclopaedic painting contains a nuanced knowledge of plants and animals, of seasons and fire, of permanent water and ephemeral soaks. It is also a topographic replica of the landscape around Parnngurr in Western Australia: ranges and sand-hills, creeks and rock holes. The Minyipuru (Seven Sisters) flit across

the western side of the painting, pursued by the mischievous Yurla. Their presence in the painting is incidental, just one strand in the fabric of Martu daily life.

For several days in searingly hot conditions, Wallworth and her crew filmed eight senior Martumili artists as they sang and painted their story into life creating a striking 5 x 3 metre masterpiece in order to pass their knowledge of country onto young Indigenous rangers.

VIRTUAL ELDERS

Visitors are welcomed to the exhibition by several virtual elders on life-sized digital screens. They also appear throughout the exhibition, filling the space with Indigenous voices as they share their stories.

(top) Visitors immersed in *Always Walking Country: Parnngurr Yarrkalpa*, an installation by Lynette Wallworth. (opposite) *Yarrkalpa (Hunting Ground)*, 2013, by Kumpaya Girgirba, Yikartu Bumba, Kanu Nancy Taylor, Ngamaru Bidu, Yuwali Janice Nixon, Reena Rogers, Thelma Judson and Ngalangka Nola Taylor, Martumili Artists, National Museum of Australia. Photo: George Serras, National Museum of Australia

I see the painting as a skin lifted from the land and resting
on the floor, holding the sinews of the country underneath it.
Lynette Wallworth, 2017





Kuru Ala (meaning 'eyes open'), a striking rock formation with two caves that look like eyes under a jutting brow. Photo: Annieka Skinner, Tjanpi Desert Weavers

Additional resources

***Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters* website**

To support the exhibition, the National Museum of Australia has developed extensive online resources that document the artworks and the artists featured in the exhibition.

<http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/songlines>

Catalogue

A significant catalogue printed in both hardcover and paperback accompanies the exhibition. Through artworks, stories and in-depth analyses, the book provides an important resource for those interested in knowing more about these complex pathways of spiritual, ecological, economic, cultural and ontological knowledge — the stories 'written in the land'.

The National Museum of Australia welcomes approaches from institutions or publishers interested in producing an adapted or translated edition.

<http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/songlines/shop>

Art centre hub

The National Museum of Australia worked closely with Indigenous artists to develop a range of merchandise, including paper products, textiles, jewellery, accessories and other mementos.

While on display at the Museum, *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters* featured an art centre hub, a recreation of the Aboriginal-owned art centres that are dotted across the Central and Western deserts of Australia. These hubs are where people learn to run businesses and become leaders in a cross-cultural world. People engage in a range of artistic practices, from painting, carving and weaving to the newest media technologies.

In the exhibition's art centre, visitors could watch artists at work and buy their creations such as weavings, baskets and paintings. Through the sale of original art and the *Songlines* product line, the participating art centres have seen significant returns with cost-sharing arrangements in place to support the communities.

The Museum will provide advice on merchandising opportunities and will be able to source products from approved suppliers in Australia.



Minyipuru at Pangkal, 2016, by Mulyatingki Marney, Nancy Nyanjilpayi Chapman and May Wokka Chapman, Martumili Artists, acrylic on canvas, National Museum of Australia. Photo: George Serras, National Museum of Australia

The Seven Sisters Tjukurpa, our Dreaming creation law, is very important to us, we hold it strongly and teach to the generations who come after us. This Tjukurpa travels through many people's country.
Inawinytji Williamson, 2017



The tracks of the Seven Sisters at Walinynga (Cave Hill).
Photo: June Ross, University of New England

Summary of specifications

Exhibition size

The size of the exhibition will vary from approximately 600-800m², dependent on the inclusion of the Dome. Note that the Dome can be installed outside of the main gallery.

Multimedia Dome

The Dome requires a minimum clear floor area of 10m², with a surrounding clearance of 6.5m. It also requires three-phase five-pin power outlets and a local high speed internet connection with remote access.

Design

The exhibition layout follows the Seven Sisters story geographically, ancestrally and spiritually. Works are arranged according to their place of origin (sites) as well as by their place in the Seven Sisters narrative, enabling visitors to 'walk' along the songlines. The National Museum of Australia will provide advice and feedback on the proposed layout for your venue.

Object crates

Objects will be crated for transport. Crates must be stored in dry, pest-free conditions by the venue for the duration of the display.

Freight

The National Museum will coordinate all arrangements for freight. Exhibition object crates are to be transported by airfreight. For ground transport the exhibition object crates are to be transported in a climate-controlled, air-ride, rigid pantec vehicle.

Environmental conditions

The venue must have temperature- and humidity-controlled gallery spaces that allow for 20 degrees +/- 3 degrees Celsius and 50% relative humidity (RH) +/- 5% constant conditions.

The exhibition space should have controlled exhibition lighting, preferably with no natural light as the Dome requires complete darkness to operate at peak resolution.

Security

The venue will need to provide electronic and physical security within the gallery space.

Install and takedown

The National Museum will provide assistance to the venue to install and de-install the exhibition.



Walinynga (Cave Hill) rock art: the concentric circles represent the Seven Sisters, and the yellow dots their food. Photo: June Ross, University of New England

Exhibition support

Marketing

The National Museum of Australia will provide advice on marketing and will need to approve any artwork for printed products such as signage, brochures and advertising material. Artwork for use in print advertising and/or printed posters will be provided along with a style guide. A media release and a selection of copyright-cleared images will be provided to the venue for marketing and media purposes.

Associated programming and opening event

The National Museum will assist in coordinating an opening event and a range of public programs at the host venue and will provide advice and approval on matters of Aboriginal cultural protocols. Key artists from the exhibition may be able to attend the opening and contribute cultural performances, offering a range of rich and engaging public programs.

The Museum will collaborate with the touring venue to develop an appropriate program and coordinate artist travel, public lectures and performances to promote the exhibition.

Copyright

The National Museum will coordinate all aspects of communication with Aboriginal artists and relevant Aboriginal organisations, including copyright clearance.

Costs

Fees available upon request.

Sponsorship opportunity

The National Museum of Australia is seeking a corporate partner to support the international tour of the *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters* exhibition. Please contact Annalisa Millar, Head of Development, for further information: annalisa.millar@nma.gov.au or 02 6208 5040

EXHIBITION CONTACTS

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Kuru Ala, 2016, by Estelle Inyika Hogan, Myrtle Pennington, Ngalpingka Simms, Lorraine Davies, Debbie Hansen and Tjaruwa Angelina Woods, Spinifex Arts Project, acrylic on linen, on loan from Wayne and Vicki McGeoch Collection, © the artists / Copyright Agency, 2018



The National Museum of Australia is the place where Australian stories come alive. Located in Canberra, the capital city of Australia, the Museum explores the rich and diverse stories of Australia's land, nation and people.

Where Australian Stories come alive



This is Australia's oldest story. A sweeping tale that uncovers the deep truths of our landscape — ancient stories riven into the very rocks and soil. It divulges powerful lessons about what it means to be human and to live in this country.

Dr Mathew Trinca, Director, National Museum of Australia