



## AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION ISLAMABAD

10 April 2014

Press Release

**‘Australia Day in Spring’ returns to Lahore in 2014 with the theme:**

**‘Celebrating Australia’s Indigenous Heritage’**

Australia Day in Spring returns to Lahore tonight with the theme ‘Celebrating Australia’s Indigenous Culture’.

The Australian High Commissioner, Mr Peter Heyward, introduced the premier Aboriginal music trio ‘**Western Creation**’ and inaugurated an exhibition of Indigenous Australian art called ‘**Bush Medicine**’ the Avari Hotel Lahore.

The musicians have flown from the City of Melbourne to perform at Australia Day in Spring events this week.

The group is a winner of United Nations Intercultural Award 2013 and will present aboriginal musical performances including the “didgeridoo”.

Alan Harris, elder of the Noongar tribe and his two fellow players Tristan and Azlan, of the Bibbulmann clan of Western Australia, are one of the most inspiring indigenous groups currently performing in Australia. *Western Creation* has performed extensively throughout Australia and internationally, promoting reconciliation and understanding between all people in Australia, into the hearts and minds of their audiences, using dance, music, song and history.

‘Bush Medicine’ comprises ten artworks by eight artists (six women and two men). The artists all come from the Western Desert region and reflect that genre of contemporary Aboriginal art; it is common for Aboriginal families to share their Dreamings (that is, their spiritual beliefs that inspire the art).

The ‘Bush Medicine’ exhibition was especially bought to Pakistan for Australia Day in Spring and will have a showing at Nomad Art Gallery in Islamabad from Sunday 13 April to Tuesday 15 April.

“It is terrific to be able to showcase a central part of Australia’s cultural heritage in the form of these beautiful paintings. This is one of the first times an exhibition of Indigenous Australian art has been shown in Pakistan”, said the High Commissioner, in opening the exhibition.

Indigenous Australian art is the oldest ongoing tradition of art in the world. Initial forms of artistic Aboriginal expression were rock carvings, body painting and ground designs, which date back more than 30,000 years. The quality and variety of Australian Indigenous art produced today reflects the richness and diversity of Indigenous culture and the distinct differences between tribes, languages, dialects and geographic landscapes.

Art has always been an important part of Aboriginal life, connecting past and present, the people and the land, and the supernatural and reality. Indigenous Australian art is now shown all over the world, in famed galleries such as the Musée du quai Branly (MQB) which has a large permanent Aboriginal art exhibition, in addition to dedicated exhibitions in London, Paris, Berlin, Tokyo, Seoul and across the United States.

Mr Heyward was joined in Lahore by Australia's Honorary Consul Mr Salim Ghauri (CEO of NetSol Technologies Ltd) and Senior Trade and Investment Commissioner for South Asia, Ms Nicola Watkinson, who is now a frequent visitor to Pakistan. This is a sign that Australia is serious about realising the strong potential in the trade and investment relationship with Pakistan.

Australian-Pakistan bilateral trade is currently around AUD 800 million but has much potential to grow. Agri-business and agricultural science linkages continue to drive the Australia-Pakistan economic and trade relationship.

“Australians had a taste of Pakistani mangoes last year and we look forward to receiving commercial shipments this season”, Mr. Heyward said.

Australia and Pakistan's links in the education sector are increasingly important, with around 10,000 Pakistani students studying in Australia at present.

Mr Heyward thanked sponsors BHP Billiton – operator of the Zamzama Gas Field and also the largest employer of Indigenous Australians - and Thai Airways. He also appreciated Netsol Technologies, SMEC, Bank Al-Habib, Pierlite, RMT Enterprises, AEO Pakistan, SlimTEL, Coca Cola and FedEx/Gerry's.

For further information: Media Liaison Officer 03008547816