**Media release**

**We would be grateful if you could support us by bringing this link to the attention of the wider community.**

**Imagine the demise** of an Indigenous-run artists’ collective based at Uluru, successfully representing some 700 artists and craftspersons in a region bigger than Sweden. Imagine the end of an organisation with a focus on punu-making (traditional wood carving) which has kept culture strong through workshops, presentations and tours for thousands of tourists every year. Imagine what it would mean to withdraw $3m of support for artists and their families living in 22 remote communities in the central desert region. Just imagine that. What should we do? **Maruku Arts** has been a key player in the central desert for 35 years but has now been left to flounder, as we have not been recipients of operational funding from Government for 25 years. Right now, we have become victims of our own success. The situation is critical. We need the public’s support.

To fight back we will **launch a Fundraiser page at chuffed.org to save the organisation and help Anangu artists and tour guides to survive**.

**The link will go online on Tuesday 5th May 2020 at 9am.**

[**https://chuffed.org/project/oldest-living-culture-needs-help**](https://chuffed.org/project/oldest-living-culture-needs-help)

**We need Anangu to stay safe**

**and we need the organisation to survive!!!**

Here, in central Australia, the cultures of Aboriginal Australians have been with us for 40,000 years. With the unprecedented closure of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in order to protect the health of indigenous Australians at this critical time, we, at indigenous-owned Maruku Arts at Uluru, will be continuing to do our part to share the traditional stories of central Australia with the world and to make sure these cultures are with us for generations to come.

**But to do so, we need help!**

As we all struggle with the global impact of Covid-19, the work of Maruku Arts has become more crucial than ever to support and preserve Anangu culture.

**Maruku has no ongoing operational funding** from government and since tourism to Uluru has ceased, our organisation has virtually no income. We struggle to keep the organisation alive as overhead costs still need to be paid and the Jobkeeper scheme doesn’t apply to many of our staff.

This strongly effects our Anangu artists and tour guides, as Maruku has provided essential income for over 20 remote communities.

Life is already a daily struggle for Indigenous people in isolated desert areas. Without that extra income and with winter approaching, we fear for the future of Anangu.

**We all know that when lots of people donate even the smallest amount, magic can happen so even if it’s just $1.00 and you can share the link to our page it’s a powerful thing! You’re not just raising funds but investing in a collective cultural knowledge bank.**

**About Maruku:**

Maruku Arts was launched 35 years ago to preserve and promote Anangu Culture through art, craft, design and dance. With a Board of 10 Directors, we are open to membership by approximately 500 Anangu cultural practitioners who live in 22 communities in the NPY Lands of Central Australia located in the NT, SA and WA. Based at Mutitjulu, Maruku assists our artists, craftsmen and women, dancers and singers to promote their cultural output through our Gallery in the Cultural Centre in the Uluru Kata Tjuta National park, through our highly acknowledged tourism program, and through exhibitions held all over Australia and the world. We are famous for our punu (wood carvings), walka (paintings in acrylic on canvas), walka panels (incised & painted boards), inma (song and dance) and Welcome to Country performances.

We are also known for our popular Tourism products: Dot Painting Workshops, Cultural Walks and Team Building exercises for Corporates and Groups.

In the current Covid-19 crisis we are working hard to keep Maruku alive while contributing to community activities and helping to keep culture strong. We are also working to find ways to elevate spirits in these harsh times.

**Here’s what the donations will go towards:**

1. We would like to help families in need with **purchase orders for food** and **warm blankets** for the upcoming winter.
2. The funds will also be used to pay a **living allowance to our Anangu tour guides and staff**here in Mutitjulu who no longer have work and don't get government assistance as they are casual workers or not eligible for the Jobkeeper scheme.
3. Parts of the funds will be used to **pay essential invoices to keep the organisation alive** and small amounts of the funds will go towards Volunteers allowances for Maruku staff not covered under the Jobseeker scheme.
4. If possible, we want Anangu to have activities while they are in lockdown, so we will encourage people to continue their art production at home. Funds raised during this campaign will help provide materials - canvas, paint, brushes - chisels, files and axes.
5. Where possible, funds will also be used to purchase art works, which we will offer through our website and social media to keep wages coming in for Anangu and their families.
6. And we will provide ongoing activities, like Bush trips to keep people active and engaged with country in these tough times.

Credit press photo:

Rene Kulitja on country, Copyright Maruku Arts

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