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## POST TIMEOUT

# Bush colours spread message

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**"My** job is to go out and infect people with a good virus," Helen Read says.

The good virus she refers to is understanding and respect for the culture and ways of Aboriginal people in some of Australia's most remote communities, and awareness of the appalling hardships and conditions in which they live.

She's spreading the virus in two main ways: by bringing art from the communities to the city through Palya Art, and by taking city people out on Didgeri Air Art Tours to meet the people of these communities in northern and central Australia.

"I've been talking for over 20 years," she says.

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aware of the conditions out in the communities."

Disease, malnutrition and hardship, Helen says, are worse out here than she ever encountered as a nurse in the harshest areas of Biafra and Nigeria, where she worked as a nurse in the 1970s.

Helen is English born and has a degree in art, a pilot's licence and nursing qualifications from her home country as well as being a midwife.

Now based in Darwin, she started work as a nursing-sister pilot for the Pintupi Homelands Health Service, in the Northern Territory, in 1985.

Since then she has also

been "learned up" in the languages, ways, spiritual beliefs and customs of the many people she visits and who have come to know and accept her as family.

Now she is counting on viewers, art lovers, buyers and collectors of the beautiful, colourful paintings, basketry, sculpture and models she has brought from the communities to help her promote the knowledge and stories that underpin the works.

All the art in this show, which runs at Gallows Gallery in Mosman Park, until June 20, is from artist-owned centres.

Next Thursday, June 3,

Helen will launch a comprehensive website, [www.palya.com.au](http://www.palya.com.au), that will clearly indicate the locations of all 23 communities whose art she represents, with information about the region, the artworks and the artists.

Didgeri Air Art Tours (DAAT) introduces non-indigenous and indigenous people to each other under mutually respectful circumstances at art centres.

Small groups fly out with Helen, visiting the communities and meeting artists and custodians in the Kimberley, Arnhem Land and other parts of central and northern Australia.

For more information about DAAT, go to [www.didgeri.com.au](http://www.didgeri.com.au).