



THE HON PAUL FLETCHER MP
Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts

MEDIA RELEASE

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Rare Kaurna shield added to AGSA's collection

The Morrison Government has announced \$100,000 to support the acquisition of a rare 19th century *Murlapaka* (also spelt *Mulubakka*) shield, attributed to the Kaurna people from the Adelaide Plains, by the Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA).

Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, said the Government is pleased to support this important acquisition, which is the first shield of its kind to join the Gallery's collection.

"The Art Gallery of South Australia has a close relationship with the Kaurna community established over many years through ongoing connection with community and an artist-led approach to acquisitions. This shield will be a visual reminder for all visitors to the gallery that they are on Kaurna land," said Minister Fletcher.

"The Gallery has now reopened to the public following COVID-19 social distancing restrictions and I encourage members of the public to visit the Gallery to view this shield, one of only six known examples from the nineteenth century, a significant time in the story of Adelaide's traditional custodians."

Senior Kaurna Man, Mickey Kumatpi O'Brien said to have the shield back on Kaurna lands is *Paitya* (deadly).

"The *Murlapaka* shield shows strength in its design, protection in its history, connection to country in its image, and the spirit of its creator in its life. We know the land is the oldest living thing, the trees are connected to this land the knowledge and wisdom of the land is in the trees," Mickey Kumatpi said.

"The shield itself was cut from a tree and its shadow remained in the tree and the shield took with it the knowledge and wisdom of the land, culture and people. It returned to its home of the Kaurna *Miyurna* (Adelaide Plains People). And now it tells many stories, when we listen, observe and share its journey and place, thanks to the support of the Gallery."

Barkandji artist and Art Gallery of South Australia Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Nici Cumpston said the *Murlapaka* is made from the inner bark of a Eucalyptus tree with

remnants of red earth pigments over the shield surface. It is one of two types of shield made by the Kurna people and a powerful symbol of Kurna identity.

“It is the first shield made by a Kurna person, dated to the early contact period, to enter the Gallery’s collection. Through its significant acquisition, the Gallery continues its commitment to building and sharing understanding of Kurna culture while acknowledging that *AGSA Kurna yartangka yuwanthi* (AGSA stands on Kurna Country),” Nici Cumpston said.

Art Gallery of South Australia Director Rhana Devenport ONZM said AGSA is immensely proud to now be home to this revered *Murlapaka*, made possible through the support of the Australian Government’s National Cultural Heritage Account and through Tarnanthi: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art supported by BHP.

“To celebrate this milestone acquisition, the Art Gallery of South Australia is committed to having the *Murlapaka* permanently on display in the Gallery, for all visitors to Kurna Country to appreciate and acknowledge,” Rhana Devenport said.

The Australian Government’s National Cultural Heritage Account helps keep items of cultural significance in Australia so they can be preserved and made available to the public. Public cultural organisations can apply for funding to purchase and provide permanent public access to these items.

For more information visit: www.arts.gov.au/ncha

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