



**George Souris M.P**  
Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing  
Minister for the Arts

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **INDIGENOUS WOMAN RECEIVES \$30,000 ARTS FELLOWSHIP**

Sydney artist, curator and writer Tess Allas has been awarded this year's \$30,000 Indigenous Arts Fellowship so she can research a unique Aboriginal art form, Minister for the Arts, George Souris, announced today.

Mr Souris said the talented Ms Allas will use the grant to study the works of generations of Aboriginal women from the La Perouse area, in Sydney's south, who have turned seashells into objects for the arts and tourism market for more than 100 years.

"During the 12 month fellowship, Tess Allas will focus on the work of highly respected Indigenous artists Esme Timbery and her great-grandmother Queen Emma Timbery," Mr Souris said.

"Many of these works are currently held in various institutions and private collections across Australia and overseas.

"The fellowship will enable Ms Allas to visit collections of Aboriginal shell work such as those at the Musee's du Quai Branly and Confluences in France.

"The independent judging panel commented that Ms Allas' project has great significance to NSW Aboriginal arts and culture as little is currently known of the craft practice specific to State's East Coast.

"The judges also said by highlighting a NSW specific cultural identity, it will provide a research platform for other artists.

"I congratulate Ms Allas on the being selected from a quality field of nominees for this year's Indigenous Art Fellowship."

Ms Allas said her project is designed to broaden the understanding of the history of artists working with shells.

"In 1910, shell worked objects by Queen Emma Timbery caused a sensation in the art world when they were displayed in England," she said.

"Since learning of this account 20 years ago, the story behind these remarkable artworks has captured my imagination. I have always wondered what had become of them.

"I want to find these artworks and if possible, bring them home either physically or electronically and document the story of their journey from La Perouse to London and beyond.

“I am delighted to receive this important fellowship and look forward to starting work on my project next year.”

Ms Allas has worked in the Aboriginal visual art and cultural sector for more than 20 years as an arts educator, writer and researcher as well as a gallery and museum curator.

She currently teaches Aboriginal Art History at the College of Fine Arts at the University of NSW and was recently appointed to a research position at the College of Fine Arts (COFA) Sydney.

The NSW Indigenous Arts Fellowship is designed to assist a NSW based Indigenous artist further develop his or her practice.

Applicants are required to demonstrate how their proposal would contribute to the development of NSW Aboriginal arts practice and benefit the State's arts and cultural sector.

Chair of the 2011 Indigenous Arts Fellowship assessment panel is Rhoda Roberts. A member of the Bundjalung nation, Widjabul clan of Northern NSW and South East QLD, Rhoda's involvement in the arts is extensive.

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