



Out of the desert

Harold Furber is at the forefront of some of Central Australia's most creative community-building initiatives.

ABOVE
Harold Furber

When Harold Furber takes his seat on the afternoon discussion panel at the Charles Darwin Symposium in October, he will bring a tapestry of experience in working creatively with Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

Mr Furber will join other leaders and artists for a panel discussion, which will present Indigenous perspectives on the future of Indigenous arts. It will be the finale of the day-long Symposium, "Mwarre anthurre" Art works: Communities thrive, in which the role of the arts in building social cohesion, cultural capital and business enterprise will be explored.

TEXT
Robyn McDougall

These are topics Harold Furber has worked with and considered for decades. Chief among his current catalogue of commitments is holding the position of Deputy Chair of Desert Knowledge Australia, a Northern Territory Statutory Authority tasked with responsibility for a host of visionary ventures including the Desert Knowledge Precinct, a 73ha development near Alice Springs that is on the way to becoming an international hub for desert knowledge activities. The Precinct is the home base of the \$90m Desert Knowledge Co-operative Research Centre (DK-CRC) and the Desert Peoples Centre campus (a new association of Batchelor Institute

of Indigenous Tertiary Education and the Centre for Appropriate Technology). Mr Furber is the Chairperson of the Desert Peoples Centre and a Board Member of the DK-CRC.

The Alice Springs-based Desert Knowledge partnerships are part of a national and global network mandated to "build thriving desert knowledge economies, operating on the basic values of harmony, sustainability and wealth creation". But Mr Furber moves as easily and as regularly in the arts and sporting world as he does in the world of strategic thinking.

Born in Alice Springs, Mr Furber grew up at the Methodist Overseas Mission at Minjilang – now a remote community in Western Arnhem Land – in the '50s and '60s where he knew and witnessed some of the famous Bark Painters of Western Arnhem Land at work. He played football at senior levels in Darwin, Adelaide, Brisbane and Alice Springs. "Sporting and cultural activities, including arts help bring communities together," says Mr Furber. "They help form the glue that sustain community co-operation and harmonious relationships."

Recently Mr Furber has worked as Assistant Coordinator at the Titjikala Art Centre and Gallery located on the edge of the Simpson Desert, 120km south of Alice Springs.

But his work with the Desert Knowledge Australia partnerships and the Titjikala Art Centre give only a small taste of his reach and activities. Mr Furber has been involved in setting up a number of community-based organisations in Central Australia. He has also worked on Land Rights and Native Title issues, Reconciliation and the Stolen Generation matters. Mr Furber has attended the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations in Geneva as well as other international meetings in Europe and the USA.

Mr Furber holds a BA in Management, majoring in Public Administration from the University of Canberra and a Diploma in Social Work from the University of South Australia.

WEB BYTE

Visit the Titjikala Art Centre at www.titjikalaarts.com.au.
Desert Knowledge Australia at www.desertknowledge.com.au/dka/index.cfm.