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NEW LOOK GAB TITUI CULTURAL CENTRE TO REOPEN NEXT YEAR

A new look Gab Titui Cultural Centre with more space for exhibitions, performance, outdoor program activities and improved access will open to the public and visitors to Thursday Island in 2013.

The two stage \$3 million project is the biggest renovation since the centre opened in April 2004.

The Torres Strait Regional Authority Chairperson, John 'Toshie' Kris, has described works scheduled for completion by early April 2013 as a major step forward in the development of the Gab Titui as a cultural centre piece for the whole Torres Strait region.

"The first stage will create improved access to the building with a disability ramp, new public amenities, viewing platform and renovation of the main gallery's western wall to reduce heat and improve the storage environment.

"The next stage involves doubling existing display areas to museum standards and a refit of the centre's shop."

Mr Kris said the enhanced display areas and improved access will allow larger exhibitions of Torres Strait artefacts and contemporary art and accommodate the expected surge in community involvement and visitors to the centre. "We want to foster that sense of community ownership so that as more people become involved in the centre they will be involved in creating arts and craft that will help to improve the centre financial viability."

Mr Kris said the removal of the playground and mango tree in the grounds of the centre will greatly improve the space available for culture based, outdoor programs such as traditional craft workshops and demonstrations, childrens education activities, story telling, dance rehearsals and performances.

"The removal of the playground has freed up valuable space that will be utilised more appropriately as a flexible space for formal and informal children's cultural education activities throughout the year.

"The mango tree is believed to be between 60 and 80-years-old and apart from taking up a large area, it causes health and safety risks for visitors to the centre.

"Kaurareg Elders and representatives, the Torres Shire Council and the Cultural Heritage Branch of the Department of Natural Resource Management have all confirmed that the tree is not culturally significant and they have raised no objection to its removal."

Mr Kris said the improved access to the centre, increased exhibition areas, museum quality display cases, improved shop-fit out and better utilisation of the back area is part of the centre's transition into a new chapter in its role as the gateway to Torres Strait culture and art.

"Gab Titui is an important part of the regions sustainable arts and craft industry and must grow in line with increasing profile, recognition, market and demand of Torres Strait culture and art at national and international levels.



Caption: More efficient use of space will allow and outdoor performance area and stage to be added to the Gab Titui Cultural Centre.

ENDS

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