TERRITORY'S SECRET GEM

BY NANNETTE HOLLIDAY

Nestled on the banks of the Katherine River, the Territory's fourth largest town is a diamond among its rugged surrounds.

Ever since Katherine was named by explorer John McDouall Stuart in 1862, it has attracted a range of people that have much in common — they're full of energy, passionate and optimistic about their region and its bright future.

Through the diversity and struggles of the Second World War, four devastating floods (1957, 1974, 1998 and 2006) — the worst in 1998 with floodwaters rising in the Katherine River to a height of 20.4 metres, affecting 1100 homes and loss of three lives — the townspeople have survived and thrived.

Like the changing of the wet and dry seasons, the people and region have many faces. They're genuine, kind-hearted and supportive. Life here has no boundaries with endless opportunities for people with determination.

While the Katherine spirit will capture your soul, the creative food destinations will satisfy your inner cravings.

Start your morning with a massive fresh toasted sandwich at Black Russian Caravan, coffee and cake at Finch Café, a salmon stack lunch at Pop Rocket Café and a fine dining dinner with white tablecloths on a tin boat cruising up Katherine Gorge at sunset, or dine on a traditional camp oven meal and revel in Territory tales under the stars at Marksie's Stockman's Camp.

If cooking's your thing, see Jason at Town and Country butcher for the freshest meat (and fish) in town.

Katherine, 320 kilometres south-east of Darwin, is commonly known as the Crossroads of the Outback or where the Outback meets the Tropics because of its location between the Darwin, Kakadu, Barkly, Gulf of Carpentaria and Kimberley regions, and a central transport hub for the north-south and east-west routes.

The town is surrounded by a multitude of parks and natural attractions — Katherine Hot Springs, Low Level Nature Park, Nitmiluk National Park, including Edith Falls, Cutta Cutta and Kintore caves nature parks, and Elsey and Gregory national parks.

From a shanty pub and repeater station to service the Australian Overland Telegraph Line in 1872, Katherine began growing only after the completion of the railway bridge in 1926.

The iconic Ghan passenger train now travels between Darwin and Adelaide twice a week during the dry season and once in the wet stopping at Katherine and Alice Springs. There are also numerous freight services and bulk trains.

Katherine has developed into a bustling mining, pastoral and agricultural centre, and a strategic military region with RAAF Base Tindal opening in 1988.

The surrounding dry tropical savannah woodlands, rock outcrops, limestone caves, sandstone escarpments, spectacular gorges, ancient Aboriginal rock art, cultural activities and natural spring aquifers not only attract visitors from far and wide but also provide the perfect backyard for the local population of 11,000.

Enjoy cycling or walking the trails around town, beside the river and around the gorge; a refreshing swim at the hot springs and Low Level; canoeing the rivers and gorges and fishing or camping.

The town also has an 18-hole grass golf course and many professional sporting grounds.

So, it's not surprising that many

famous Australian sporting identities were born or raised in Katherine: Caden Evans (cycling), Leisel Jones (swimming), James McManus and Luke Kelly (rugby league), Matthew Sinclair and D'arcy Short (cricket) and Stephanie Talbot (basketball).

Other well-known people include Clyde Fenton (the first flying doctor), C.W Stoneking (blues musician), Mick Dodson, Malarndirri McCarthy and Mike Reed (politics).

The town's municipality area services Timber Creek, Mataranka, Borroloola, Daly River and Pine Creek regional centres. It encompasses the Flora River Junction in the west, east to Maranboy, north to the Fergusson River and Sturt Plateau in the south earning it the title Big Rivers Region.

The regional lands are home to the Jawoyn, Wardaman and Dagoman Aboriginal people and remain an important meeting place for them.

The Walpiri people from Victoria River and Tanami Desert also have a dedicated community base at Katherine East.

There's a great arts and cultural community in town. Popular festivals include the Katherine Festival and Barunga Festival, Australia's longestrunning festival.

Other cultural experiences include Top Didj, with hands-on Rarrk painting, fire-lighting and spear throwing, or learn about station life and pat some animals at Katherine Outback Experience.

Whether you want an adventurous or relaxing holiday, a career change or new life, there's something for everyone in Katherine. **TQ**





WELCOME TO OUR TOWN

BY THE MAYOR, FAY MILLER

Katherine is in a unique location in the Territory - at the crossroads of northsouth and east-west, and surrounded by magnificent parks and river systems. I call it Adventure Territory.

I came to Katherine in late 1989 for what I thought would be a four-year timeframe. My story is no different to dozens of other locals who have done the same – and are still here decades later. There is something special about Katherine and the region that keeps one here. There are also many stories of those who have left to "greener pastures" only to return to Katherine

after a couple of years saying how much they missed this place.

I have had the privilege of serving our community for many years now and never fail to enjoy the many and varied interests and cultures that we share.

Katherine and the Big Rivers Region offers great opportunities for economic development. Trials in both the horticulture and agriculture industry show there is still great interest in developing the north. We are also very fortunate to have RAAF Base Tindal, which will continue to grow.

This year we have certainly had our share of disappointments economically and socially with the coronavirus pandemic quarantining - no different

to the rest of the world. It has, however, been rewarding to see how so many businesses have been in a position to adapt to introduce a new way of presenting their product to meet consumers' needs even in quarantine.

Our region is very drive-market oriented and this year has been an extremely hard economic time for those who cater specifically for this sector. We are a resilient mob, though, and I am quietly confident that 2021 is going to be a ripper of a year.

To that end, we are focussing on redevelopments throughout our town, which will make it much more pleasant for locals and visitors alike. **TQ**



TRANSFORMING **KATHERINE**

The first stage of Katherine CBD's revitalisation project is the town square.

Work should be completed by the end of 2020 for everyone to enjoy.

"The square's natural prominence will create green space for the community to relax and socialise while also benefiting the surrounding businesses," says Katherine Mayor Fay Miller.

"It will totally transform the area, adding colour and vitality to the CBD."

Designed by Darwin architects, the Ashford Group, the focus is on shade, accessibility, safety and low maintenance.

The square, dominated by a natural canopy of shade trees, will include cooling misters, a portable café/kiosk, audio visual equipment, festive lighting with various options, public ablutions, safety lighting and CCTV cameras.

The plans also allow for further opportunities to develop outwards across the CBD and even wider.

"A unique feature will be a locally designed and constructed sculpture," Fay says.

The exciting concept plans for

trees, grassed areas and misting fans. Katherine Town Council endorsed the initial town square stage in February. The costings, which included the total fit-out of the project, fell under budget.

"The entire revitalisation project is something special for Katherine. It has been broken into smaller stages and costed out," says Fay. "Along with the connecting Arts Trail, the town square stage will inspire the community to mix and mingle in refreshing surrounds."

Other projects benefiting the community include the replacement of the Don Dale Pavilion and upgrading the canteen, change rooms, toilets, communication and first aid facilities at the sportsground and upgrading of the Katherine Showground.

Katherine's CBD revitalisation were presented in May 2019. The long-term vision creates a cool, walkable city with additional shade structures, native

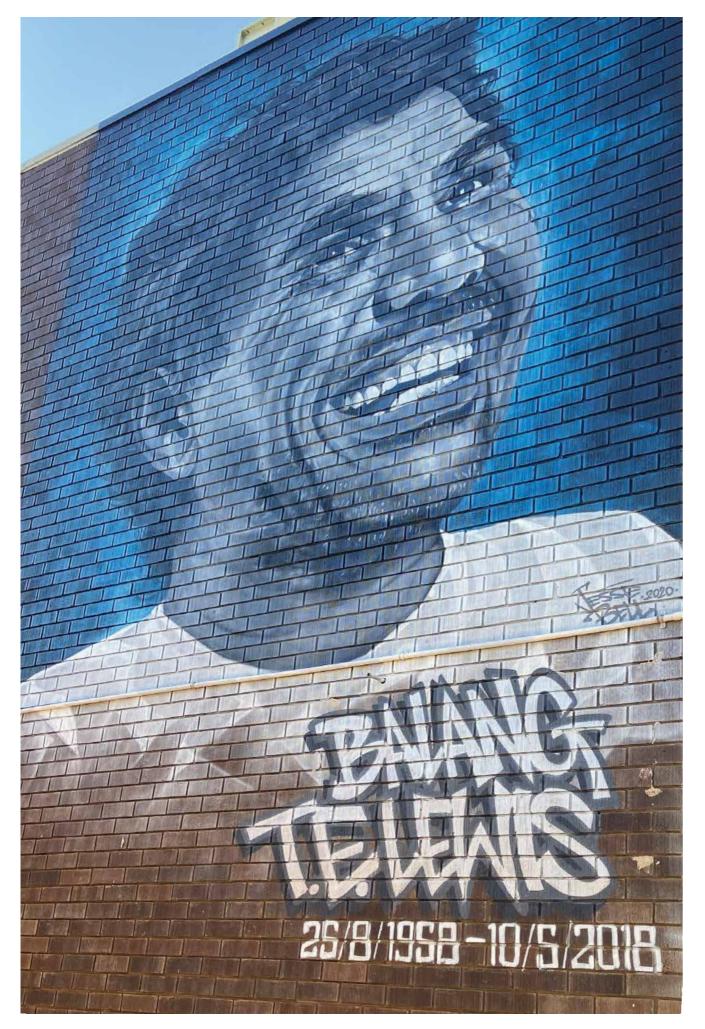
Katherine residents enjoy outdoor activities, and the sportsground facilities service more than 3000 people a week. The local rugby league, soccer, athletics, touch football and rugby union clubs all call the grounds "home".

Upgrades to the Katherine Showground and Multi-Purpose Centre include roads, rodeo and campdraft infrastructure, amenities, air-conditioning, water, power and sewerage connections.

The showground redevelopment is supporting four Katherine businesses and 20 local jobs.

"The works ensure the community will have modern and updated facilities we can all enjoy."

The Katherine Town Council acknowledges the funding and assistance from the Northern Territory Government for the planning of the projects. **TQ**





MURALS CAPTURE **RICH HISTORY**

PHOTOS: STEVE HOARE AND NANNETTE HOLLIDAY

Katherine's new street beautification project not only depicts significant aspects of the region's rich history, but also encourages community pride and ownership of the town.

Regional Arts chair Thomas Manning says the project was designed to celebrate significant and inspirational people from across the entire Big Rivers region, with the town as the meeting place for all local people and cultures.

There are nine murals with others being added.

They are part of Katherine Town Council's overall CBD Revitalisation project and link the arts trail between Godinymayin Yijard Arts and Culture Centre and Mimi Arts. They create vibrant outdoor spaces along Railway Terrace for future events, such as a laneway series.

into the past."

The flood mural, designed by local resident Mandy Tootell, commemorates the devasting 1998 Katherine floods.

"The murals tell of struggle, injustice, achievement, courage and triumph," says KRA Executive Officer Jacinta Mooney. "The stories provide a window It was installed by Jordan Conrad and Kaff Eine, from Proper Creative, Darwin. A collaboration of local artists, Proper Creative, is known for their fantastic street artwork.

To complement commemorative events held at the Cenotaph, RAAF Fighter Jets Over Nitmiluk Gorge highlights the significant and longstanding connection the military has in Katherine. It was designed by Territory artists Dave Collins and installed by Jesse Bell from Proper Creative.

The recent portraits in the Katherine CBD tell stories of people who have shaped the region's heritage. >









"Individually, these famous people have their own story to tell. Together, their recognition and respect are celebrated. These murals ensure their stories are never forgotten."

Neighbour, also installed by Jesse, is an incredible story of a heroic Alawa man from Hodgson Downs. In 1911, he saved a policeman from drowning in the Wilton River while under arrest and in chains himself. He was awarded the Albert Medal for his honesty and bravery.

More murals installed by Jesse include Cherry Wulumirr Daniels, who received an Order of Australia for services to the Ngukurr community; and Robert Lee and Ray Fordimail, Jawoyn elders and champions of the Jawoyn Land Claim and handback of Nitmiluk National Park 31 years ago; and the late inspirational Australian actor, renowned artist and instigator of Djilpin Arts and Culture and Walking with Spirits Festival, Balang T E Lewis.

Katherine youth, helped by Jesse, created the Indigenous stockman on horseback.

Crocodile was designed and installed by Libre Hem and Katherine High School students, while *Bats and*



Latest portrait NIDA LOWE (1932-2009)

Nida Lowe, more commonly known as Auntie Nida, is a child of the Stolen Generations who made Katherine her home after the Second World War. Her portrait, installed by Jesse Bell, commemorates her amazing journey from Brunette Downs to Groote Eylandt and later Croker Island – then her epic trip in 1941 by boat, foot, truck and train to New South Wales with missionaries and 94 other stolen children. It's also a tribute to her kindness and support for many throughout the years.

Nida had 12 children. Many more grandchildren and great grandchildren still live in Katherine. Her daughter, Maddie Bower, and grandson Joseph Perner were at the unveiling on 4 June and were overjoyed with the portrait. *Mangoes* was designed and installed by Chloe Forscutt and Mackinlay Collings and Katherine youth.

"Local businesses and building owners have also been extremely supportive," says Jacinta.

The projects have been made possible through partnering between Katherine Regional Arts, local artists, Katherine Town Council and the Territory Government. **TQ**



COLOURFUL **CHARACTERS BREED SUCCESS**



MAYOR FAY MILLER

Each of Katherine's four mayors since the beginning of the town's local government council in 1978 has been a larger-than-life character.

Mayor Fay Miller arrived in Katherine a vear after the first Mayor. Patricia Davies, had completed her term - and found she was still held in high regard by the community.

Pat was followed by Jim Forscutt, who became the longest-serving Mayor by being in office for 16 years and a councillor for 23 years.

Even today, he is recognised everywhere he goes.

When Fay's daughter arrived in Katherine in 1991, Jim happened to

be at the Greyhound bus depot he waited as she came off and said: "I'm the Mayor. Welcome to Katherine."

"She was flabbergasted," says Fay. "But it's the mark of his personality."

Anne Shepherd became Mayor after Jim retired to his nearby property in 2004.

Both Anne and Fay had been elected to council at a by-election in 2002.

Fay was elected to the NT Legislative Assembly in 2003 after Mike Reed stood down.

She retired as the Member for Katherine and Deputy Leader of the CLP after a near-fatal car accident in 2006 and her husband Mike's cancer diagnosis in 2009.

After her husband's death, Fay was asked to stand for Katherine Mayor.

"I initially refused. I was still grieving. But it made me question: what was I going to do with my life?"

Fay became Mayor in March 2012 and was resoundingly re-elected in 2017.

She attributes her wins to a combination of trust, confidence. honesty and fairness, which she'd also demonstrated during her terms in the NT Legislative Assembly.

"I'm involved in numerous committees and boards and not afraid to lobby for support. I've secured funding

for many significant Katherine and regional projects, but it doesn't happen overnight. Sometimes it takes years.

"It's taught me to have bucket loads of patience and accept the process. especially as the inaugural chair of the Big Rivers Regional Economic Development Committee – the great outcomes for the region are continuing."

Like everywhere, Katherine's tourism has been devastated by Covid-19. Some businesses have adapted, others are so specific they are unable to. With tourist numbers dramatically down, local businesses across the board are also feeling the pinch.

"With only intrastate travel available, it's a great opportunity for Territorians to revisit or visit for the first time our fabulous Big Rivers Region," Fay says.

Aside from tourism, Katherine does have a bright future – expansion of RAAF Base Tindal for years ahead; developing horticulture and agriculture, including dry farm cotton and hemp; and the long-planned Agribusiness Hub will also prove to be an advantage in the future.

Fay's main wish?

"To see more of our talented and aspiring younger people commit to becoming an elected member on Katherine Town Council. They have so much to offer and are Katherine's future." **TQ**

DISCOVERING BEST IN YOU

When you say "you're lucky" after a success, luck has nothing to do with it.

"Success starts with a vision, the right attitude and a strong belief," says Polly Hohn, founder of Polly.

"Doing your absolute best isn't luck, it's a guarantee for success."

Today, Polly is a wealth and empowerment coach, mentoring people on mindset and strategy to create their dream life and workspace a business she started just a year ago.

Polly, a qualified executive chef, small business owner and mother of three children, now aged 18, 16 and 14, did her Mindset Coaching and Human Potential training with Bob Proctor from the Proctor Gallagher Institute.

"I had nine months to become a certified consultant - I did it in three." she says.

At her first training session in Toronto, Canada, she ranked in the top 2 percent "I believed my job was to support him of consultants.

"I smashed it, and now the people I work with are smashing goals. Now I'm living the dream and helping them to as well."

But Polly's life hasn't been perfect.

"Most people have experienced hurt, heartbreak and disappointment, but it's

Being rejected at 16 for a chef

for me. I was over the moon."

Knotts Crossing Resort.

Polly began working in the office at Craig's family business, Hohns Sheet Metaland.

business from his parents.

what it was."

own grief aside.



- our attitude and feelings toward those moments that makes the difference."
- apprenticeship at Katherine's only fivestar restaurant, Kirby's, meant Polly left family and friends to pursue her dreams.
- Three months before she completed her studies, Kirby's advertised again.
- "Surprisingly, they were willing to wait
- Polly worked at Kirby's for four years before working in Queensland and then returning to Katherine in 1999.
- She fell in love with Craig and was offered the executive chef position at
- In 2002, when the erratic restaurant hours were too much while pregnant,
- In 2010, Craig and Polly bought the
- in the business, but something was yearning within – I just didn't know
- Polly's lightbulb moment came after her father-in-law's death in 2018. When no one else would read the eulogy, she stepped up, putting her

- "I'd never spoken in public before, but afterwards I thought that something in public speaking was my calling."
- With Craig's encouragement, taking part in several paradigm shift live streams and the PGI course, she's come full circle.
- "I've always loved helping others, especially through difficult and stressful times."
- Polly runs three courses: Thinking into Results, an entry point program; Lead the Field, a six-month business program; and My Path to Freedom, a free program for children from Year 10 upwards that encourages them to keep their imagination alive.
- "I'm hoping my children's program will eventually be useful for our Indigenous communities too," she says. "We should never stop dreaming and creating a better self." **TQ**

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CONTACT

Polly, Wealth and Empowerment Coach

- @ info@pollyh.com.au
- pollyh.com.au
- facebook.com/successwithpolly

THE HOHN TEAM ... (FROM LEFT) TAYLOR ACKERLEY, JENNY GRAHEK, KUART JAMERO, TUPU TAFUNAI, JOHAN ROHRINGER AND CODY ROWLANDS WITH CRAIG HOHN. PHOTO: STEVE HOARE

METAL MAGIC

Hohns Anything Metal in Katherine have been supplying quality Australian made metal products and creating masterful structures across northern Australia and Territory-wide for nearly 40 years.

- "We stock a wide range and work with top quality Australian steel, stainless steel and aluminium," says owner Craig Hohn.
- They can fold, cut, bend, drill, mill it and more — as they say, they can do anything, even repair or modify anything metal.
- "We're the only Katherine steel supplier that can also cut and fabricate to a customer's specifications. Our workmanship is guaranteed."

After working at Metalmaster for 11 years, Terry Hohn and his wife Dianne bought the business in 1982. Only Craig, the oldest of their three sons, had the vision and interest to keep the business in the family name.

Beginning his apprenticeship in 1992 after completing Year 12, he graduated as a qualified sheet metal fabricator in 1996.

Craig worked his way through every aspect of the business, including

administration, accounts and sales, and continues to train others in the

trade today.

at Knotts Crossing.

"While pregnant with our first child in 2002 she began working in the office doing accounts and administration with my mum," he says.

"My parents were old school. Everything was paper-based. Each time they'd go away we'd change a few things. It wasn't easy. They weren't keen on change."

After finally purchasing the business in 2010, Craig and Polly guickly computerised the purchasing, sales and accounts.

They invested heavily in new equipment while maintaining and upgrading older equipment, such as the 30-year-old guillotine, and are constantly looking for ways to improve efficiency.

"Our staff are No 1. They're like family. Retention of our apprentices is higher these days too."

The small team of 10 at Hohns Anything Metal are highly skilled, friendly and service-orientated. The trade qualified welders and fabrication engineers take pride in their craft and

WE'RE THE ONLY KATHERINE STEEL SUPPLIER THAT CAN ALSO CUT AND FABRICATE TO A CUSTOMER'S SPECIFICATIONS. **OUR WORKMANSHIP IS GUARANTEED**





In 1999 he met Polly, who was the chef

are renowned for their creative abilities and friendliness.

In 1999, Craig made and installed the Katherine Town Square clocktower. The waves represent the town's 1998 flood water height.

While the clocktower will not remain after the square's redevelopment, there are still many Hohns creations around Katherine and the Top End.

These include street seating, rubbish bins, sports grandstands, bus shelters, shade structures, the Cenotaph bell tower, Low Level bridge walkway, works at RAAF Tindal, the Parks and Wildlife Reserve barbecues and more.

"If its metal, it's probably a Hohns Anything Metal creation," he says. "Our team love a challenge, and there's nothing more satisfying than bringing an idea to life." **TQ**

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CONTACT

Hohns Anything Metal

- ◎ 32 Crawford Street Katherine NT
- § 08 8972 2633
- @ sales@hohns.com.au
- hohns.com.au



GREAT EXPERIENCE

Katherine Outback Experience, which was established in 2013 out of the adversity of the live beef export ban, was prospering until Covid-19 hit.

- "We thought we had all bases covered with tourism in the dry season and a national touring show during the Territory's wet season. Never in our wildest dreams had we factored in a total nationwide lockdown," says founders Tom and Annabel Curtain.
- With numerous animals to feed daily and keeping staff employed, they've scarcely broken-even since March.
- "Thankfully, soon after the lockdowns, I secured a six-month contract starting 50 young horses in blocks of six for an agricultural company," says Tom.
- They've introduced private and small group horse-riding lessons from 1-7pm Monday to Saturday.
- "We'd planned to launch these for later this year, making the business viable

all year and allow us to employ more locals full-time," says Anabel.

- The lessons are proving hugely successful with people from three to 70 learning.
- "Being around animals alleviates stress and isolation and is possibly the proven medicine many people need at this time."
- The KOE show began again on Saturdays from 4.30-6pm after the Territory Government allowed more activities after 6 June.
- "If there's greater local demand we'll increase the shows, especially during school holidays," says Annabel.
- The show is on a working farm and is a learning experience for guests of all ages — watching real horse starting and working dogs being trained for life on the land.
- "No show is the same and young horses aren't used any more than five times in a show," says Tom.

He completes the show with colourful stories of station life and singing his

award-winning songs. Guests can also feed and pat several station animals.

- Tom launched KOE in 2013, but it wasn't the show it is today.
- "When we met I saw greater potential for KOE but knew Tom couldn't do it alone," says Annabel.
- It's her creative input and business mind that has seen the operation grow, winning them multiple business and tourism awards since 2017.
- The horses they start and train for clients and stations throughout the Territory and Kimberley are used in the live horse training demonstrations in the show.
- "We also train staff in horsemanship and safety for stations. It creates a rewarding workplace."
- Additional new experiences at KOE include on-farm therapy for Territorians, and portions of the show and Tom's music now available online.
- Multiple Tamworth Golden Guitar winner Tom wears many hats singer, songwriter, entertainer, horse



trainer, spokesman for rural health, businessman and family man.

Annabel is a professionally qualified urban planner.

But her roots are firmly planted in the land – she comes from a sixthgeneration Western Australian beef farming family. Apart from Tom, her other love is Harry, their eight-monthold son.

Looking on the bright side, Anabel says: "This hiccup has provided us with more guest speaking material at events and functions." **TQ**

CONTACT

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- Katherine Outback Experience
- ♥ 115 Collins Road Katherine
- § 1300 818 612
- @ admin@katherineoutbcak.com.au
- katherineoutbackexperience.com.au





CUDDLES, CULTURE AND CREATION

Cuddle a joey wallaby, learn about Katherine's regional Aboriginal culture and discover your creative side producing Indigenous artwork or spear-throwing all in a few hours at Top Didj Cultural Experience.

While Covid-19 has halted tourism around the Territory and the world, the team at Top Didj have remained active.

"There's been little rest here — building of our new art gallery is underway and lots more is keeping us busy," says owners Alex and Petrena Ariston. The wallabies are missing the extra cuddles and treats, but artist Manuel Pamkal has been busy with the paintbrush, adding to the assortment of traditional Aboriginal artwork and didgeridoos.

"Now is the perfect time to learn how to play the didgeridoo," says Petrena.

In the meantime, jump online to view the collections from Arnhem Land, the Kimberley and the Central Western Desert, home to the Warlpiri people.

"Our portfolio of regional artists reflects the diversity of cultures across the region – from Jawoyn, Dalabon and Mayali Aborigines, who have lived in the area for thousands of years." Top Didj also stocks products from Better World Arts, Injalak and Maningrida communities and MoResin Jewellery.

"We'll happily email images if necessary."

The gallery is a member of the Aboriginal Art Association of Australia, which promotes integrity, transparency and accountability in the Indigenous art market, setting best practice for quality and ethical standards.

Alex and Petrena work closely with the Katherine Indigenous community, helping local artists with employment and accommodation.





After opening Katherine Art Gallery in 1997 and working with indigenous communities across the Top End, they recognised a need for cultural interaction with Katherine's Aboriginal people.

It was their passion for Indigenous culture and artwork that led them to establish Top Didj Cultural Experience in April 2009.

Today people eagerly line up to engage with Manuel and other local Indigenous artists to hear their stories, their culture and way of life, plus learn traditional activities, such as Rarrk painting on bark, fire lighting, spear and boomerang throwing.

"People love Manuel, and we're so proud of how openly he shares his stories, and way of life living as a kid in the bush."

He was the face of AAT Kings Australia brochure in 2019.

The Top Didj Brolga award-winning show promotes a positive experience with Aboriginal people and is the ideal addition for school excursions and conference groups.

This online review sums it up perfectly: "We learnt so much about Aboriginal people with humour in a thoroughly relaxed atmosphere and presentation by Manuel. A beautiful man with a passion for presenting his people's history." – Brisbane family. **TQ**

62 TERRITORYQ

KATHERINE





CONTACT

Top Didj Cultural Experience and Art Gallery

- ◎ 363 Gorge Road, Katherine NT
- § 0414 888 786
- @ sales @topdidj.com
- 🏶 topdidj.com