

## Media release

### Invitation to relocation of the “controversial” *Wanjina Watchers in the Whispering Stone* sculpture in Katoomba, the City of Art Censorship

On Friday 5 August 2011, from 12 to 2 pm, the *Wanjina Watchers in the Whispering Stone* sculpture by Benedikt Osváth will be moved from the front lawn of the ModroGorje Gallery at 71 Lurline Street, Katoomba, Blue Mountains.

The sculpture will be relocated to a spot a couple of minutes away, where it can still be viewed by locals and tourists, so that art lovers will still be able to enjoy it.

The DreamRaiser project artists are now staging a number of events, with planting of Wanjina Watcher sticks and mural painting of Wanjina Watchers in various places, in protest of the local council misuse of power, and to reclaim their right to art without censorship.

ModroGorje owner Vesna Tenodi said, “The protest box we created around the sculpture on 15 July was vandalised within days, showing the local thugs were again trespassing and vandalising, having no respect for other people’s rights.

In response to this mountains council farce, a group of intellectuals are now compiling a research paper under the working title of: **“The social impact of Aboriginal hate in contemporary Australian society – a social, political, and archaeological study, examining art censorship”**. This document analyses the impact of stone-age mentality on the white-guilt-ridden social mindset, and examines the new phenomenon of reverse racism and violence, condoned and encouraged by the local bureaucrats.

“We’ll be running a number of events, to raise awareness that Aboriginal harassment of artists, which has been going on ever since Margaret Preston, is not acceptable and should no longer be tolerated.

“We explore the Wanjina and Bradshaw groups of cave paintings. Both groups belong to pre-Aboriginal prehistoric Australian cave art, are in the public domain, and every artist is free to explore them. The Aborigines lost contact with their own spiritual tradition and can no longer understand nor explain the ancient cave paintings which they never created but found when they arrived.

“A positive outcome of our ordeal is that we succeeded in getting the truth out. Now everybody knows that the Aboriginal harassment and accusations of “copyright breach” and “ownership” are legally unfounded. There is no copyright on prehistoric art. There is no ownership of ideas. Most people did not know that, and were unaware that Aborigines never created the original cave paintings. Australian artists do not need to consult anyone, nor to seek anyone’s “permission” or “authorisation” to paint or sculpt any image in the public domain.

Arts Law Centre of Australia keeps making false claims, even though they had to admit there is no copyright on any image in the public domain and that Benedikt Osváth created original, unique artwork. Aborigines can talk about their “customary lore” and enforce it on each other **within** their own communities, but should not be allowed to enforce it on the rest of society through constant intimidation, violence and death threats.

We lost our case because the local bureaucrats manipulated planning laws. But we raised awareness of important issues – artistic freedom, freedom of speech and the civil rights of non-indigenous artists.

“We are very passionate about our freedom of expression. We feel contempt for these totalitarian tactics of anyone trying to dictate what we should think or write or say or paint.”

