

Woven together



TIGHTLY KNIT:
Tjankaya Tapaya,
Ninguta Edwards,
Yurpiya Lionel and
Ungakini Tjangala.
Picture: GRANT HOWETT

CENTRAL Desert women at Ernabella famous for their batik art are turning their creativity to fibre sculptures. A group of artists from Ernabella travelled to Adelaide this week to open a new exhibition at the Fabric of Life gallery in North Adelaide. Called *Tjanpi Tjuta*, meaning "lots of grass", the woven sculptures and baskets include most life-size figures of animals such as emus, cows, a fox and a camel with two riders. They have been created in grass, wool, raffia,athers, seeds and painted gumnuts, and are a natural extension of the sculptural woollen anies the women began knitting with success few years ago. "It's all grown out of the beanies and the

sculptural nature of the beanies," Fabric of Life owner Mary Jose says.

Jose has an on-going relationship with Ernabella artists through her exhibitions of their textile and fibre works.

"In recent years the artists have started using tjanpi, or grass, to make baskets and various sculptural objects for sale," she says.

"There's nothing in nature on the APY Lands that can provide them with a string or tie that is long enough to hold the tjanpi stems together - unlike the country women in the Top End who use the long pandanus fibres - so shop-bought raffia or wool is used."

Jose says the women make the birds and animals for fun and the knees and other joints often call for small feats of engineering.

As well as tjanpi, some larger, heavier pieces are made using punti, a cassia species common to the area.

As part of their visit, the artists will conduct a workshop in the Pioneer Women's Memorial Garden from 10am to 1pm tomorrow.

Anyone interested in participating in a workshop can book a place on 8361 7965.

LOUISE NUNN

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