

HELEN READ

Written by Territory Q Magazine 2015

For nearly three decades Helen Read has worked to bring a better understanding of Indigenous art and culture to a wider audience. This awareness contributes toward bringing improved conditions and better health to Australian Indigenous communities.

Helen's engagement with the lives, art and culture of Indigenous Australians began when, in the late 1970s, after working in west Africa, she came to Melbourne to further her flying training. She also trained as a midwife in order to use both qualifications for remote area health work.

Working as a nurse and pilot for the Pintupi Homelands Health Service in Kintore and Kiwirrkurra - 600 kms west of Alice Springs - in the mid 1980's, Helen was 'grown up' to see Pintupi country, people and paintings by artists and other community members. Flying with Helen, country men and women would show her their country, teaching her to look; really look and observe what she was seeing.

Comparing her experience of working with people in Pintupi country to working with people in West Africa, - health conditions in Australia being far worse - Helen realised she needed to bring a better awareness of Australia's first people to the general public. Working with local community members there seemed no better way than through facilitating meetings with Indigenous people on their own country. By working with artists Art Centres visitors could meet artists and be enveloped in art and culture in a mutually respectful environment.

Helen, a commercial pilot with twin engine and instrument ratings, has flown a diverse range of people across northwest Australia through Palya Art Tours (ex Didgeri Air Art Tours). Supporting Art Centres in turn support Palya Art to hold exhibitions and learn about Palya Art Tours.

[Visit Palya Art Tours \(link to Palya Art Tours\)](#)

Helen has supported and promoted Art Centres, artists and artworks nationally and internationally. Palya Art holds yearly exhibitions and also has an online Gallery of artworks from the artists' Art Centres.

[Visit Palya Art's Online Gallery \(link to Online Gallery>Sales Gallery\)](#)