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**MARY WARD INTERNATIONAL AUSTRALIA
AND THE MERREPEN ARTS FESTIVAL 2-4 SEPT 2011**



A community comes together at the Merrepen Arts Festival

The 25th Merrepen Arts Festival, a major cultural event for the region, will take place in the Daly River community of Nauiyu on 2 – 4 September, 2011. A full program of cultural events and a sporting carnival are planned for the Festival. The Festival, at which Mary Ward International Australia volunteers will assist, features a special cultural performance and the famous Merrepen Art Sale and Auction.

The Merrepen Arts Festival is usually held in early June. However due to the devastating floods which hit the region in February the Festival was postponed until September.

The Festival includes a concert featuring Tom E Lewis and The Black Arm Band on Saturday 3 August and the “Merrepen Art Sale & Auction” featuring the works of established and emerging artists including: Grace Kumbi, Kieren McTaggart, Christina Yambeing, Marita Sambono, Patricia McTaggart, Aaron McTaggart and Phillip Wilson.

Artists produce works that are contemporary, colourful and vibrant and usually depict the local flora and fauna of the area. They use a multitude of materials and techniques in their creative expression including silk painting, screen painting, etchings and prints. A number of the established artists from the region are now recognised on a national level.

Mary Ward International Australia and the Merrepen Arts Festival

Mary Ward International Australia (MWIA), the justice and development office of the Loreto Sisters will be supporting the Festival with nine volunteers arriving on 29 August to assist Festival organisers with a variety of tasks.

The relationship between MWIA and the Festival began in November 2010 when Loreto Sisters Susan Daily *ibvm* and Janet Palafox *ibvm* met with Lizz Bott, Corporation Manager of Merrepen Arts Aboriginal Corporation, and some artists to discuss how MWIA volunteers could assist.

As a result nine MWIA volunteers from a variety of backgrounds will travel to Daly River from Melbourne and Sydney on 29 August, remaining until 5 September to assist with Festival preparations as directed by the Community.

MWIA has been operating a volunteer program for five years. Traditionally, the volunteers have predominantly been young university students assisting in MWIA's overseas projects. This volunteering opportunity at the Merrepen Arts Festival marks a new and exciting direction for MWIA's volunteer program as MWIA looks for new avenues to engage volunteers of all ages and backgrounds.

Interviews and further information:

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About the Merrepen Arts Festival: www.merrepenfestival.com.au

About Mary Ward International Australia: www.loreto.org.au/mwia

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