

MUSEUM AUSTRALIA — 2012 MUSEUM AND GALLERIES NATIONAL AWARD

Statement

HON KEN BASTON (Mining and Pastoral) [5.34 pm]: I rise this evening because I want to bring to the house's attention an award that was given out on Tuesday this week in Adelaide—the Museums Australia's 2012 Museum and Galleries National Award, which was won by the Gascoyne Aboriginal Heritage and Culture Centre, or Gwoonwardu Mia as it is now known.

The history of Gwoonwardu Mia goes back some way. In 1992, the then Deputy Premier, Hon Hendy Cowan, held a meeting with some of the senior Aboriginal men in Carnarvon, who told him that this was what they wanted to see. The state government committed funding to the project in 2002 after the signing of an Indigenous land use agreement that involved the swap of waterfront land that was being developed for the construction of a cultural centre. Five different language groups were involved in the establishment of the cultural centre, so it took some degree of politics, I suppose, to come to an agreement. In September 2006 an interim management board was appointed with an equal number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous members. An Indigenous reference group was also set up, composed of three representatives from each language group. Gwoonwardu Mia is unique amongst cultural centres in its capacity to represent five different language groups: the Inggarda, Baiyungu, Talandji, Thudgari and Malgana languages. Bringing them all together was quite an achievement, and I would like in a moment to thank some of the people involved.

In June 2012 I accompanied Premier Barnett to the opening of the centre's permanent interpretive exhibition, which is what the award is all about; it was the completion of the Gwoonwardu Mia cultural centre. For those who have not been, it is designed like a cyclone; the rooms all go around and it is a very unique building. From memory, the cost was some \$5 million and for a long time it was a white elephant, so I am very pleased to see that it has arrived at where it is today.

I would like to thank Justine Lawler from the Gascoyne Development Commission, who has been the centre's manager for the past three years. She has been very much responsible for guiding this project to where it is now. I would also like to thank Kieran Kinsella, chief executive officer of the Midland Redevelopment Authority and former CEO of the Gascoyne Development Commission; he was called back to provide some guidance for the centre. Terry Cahill is a long-term Carnarvon businessman who was also heavily involved from the beginning, and I also acknowledge for their involvement in the project Baiyungu elder Paul Baron, and John Oxenham, a Malgana elder.

Members may have not seen this, but an article on the award for this fantastic exhibition, titled "Elders Talk Up A Win", appeared in the travel section of today's *The West Australian*. It reads, in part —

... the exhibition tells the story of the indigenous people in their own words and through artefacts such as a 32,000-year-old shell necklace, images, sounds ...

The article continues, further along —

The judges said they were impressed with the historical importance of the project and with the dynamic ways in which indigenous stories were told, from the anecdotes of elders through to interactive media.

I was quite proud to see that some of the Indigenous people whom I have employed were there on the day, playing in bands et cetera, to celebrate the occasion. I think it is going to be a very important cultural centre for Carnarvon so that people travelling through can learn about the Aboriginal history, culture and heritage of the region. I congratulate everyone involved in Gwoonwardu Mia and I look forward to witnessing some of the benefits it will bring to the Indigenous people of Carnarvon and the Gascoyne region. If members are ever passing through the town, as I know Hon Ed Dermer probably will be next year, please visit the centre, because it is well worth it.