



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### The City of Hobart unveils latest public art project

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The City of Hobart has unveiled plans for its latest public art project to honour the diverse histories of Franklin Square.

Hobart City Council Alderman, Dr Eva Ruzicka said the major public artwork commission by internationally-acclaimed artist Dr Nigel Helyer will seek to pay homage to the rich history of Franklin Square.

“As part of the body of work done on the Franklin Square Master Plan in 2011, it was identified that interpretation of the park’s cultural significance was inadequate because it focussed on historical events from a particular era, all portrayed from a single perspective,” Alderman Ruzicka said.

“Little was made of the broader values that are entwined with that history. Nothing was told of the Mouheneenner people and their relationship with Sullivans Cove, or the known relationships between Sir John Franklin or Dr William Crowther and Tasmanian Aborigines.

“The Master plan recommended a public art installation to provide more diverse interpretation of the park’s cultural heritage,” Alderman Ruzicka said.

The artwork, titled *Two Islands*, will present colonial and indigenous histories relating to the site through a soundscape consisting of archival and community oral stories.

It will operate on motion sensors and audiences will be able listen while surrounded by two sculptural forms, the hull of John Franklin’s ship, the *Erebus*, presented alongside a modern version of a Tasmanian Aboriginal canoe.

“This artwork has particularly exciting linkages with the recent discovery of both the *Erebus* and the *Terror* in and around Arctic waters, and the emergence of Indigenous Esquimaux stories of contact with the lost explorers. It links the risks of exploration with human migration around the world,” said Alderman Ruzicka.

The process commenced in March 2015 when the Council put out a national call for submissions. Helyer’s work was unanimously selected by the City’s independent Public Art Advisory Panel and this was followed by consultation with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

Tasmanian Aboriginal art historian and curator Greg Lehman, assisted the Council to engage with the cultural importance of Franklin Square and with Tasmanian Aboriginal people who have provided positive support for the project and will participate directly in its development.

“Franklin Square was close to the original shoreline of Sullivans Cove. It has great cultural significance as it has been an important destination within Hobart since its establishment in the mid-19th Century, and prior to that as a gathering place for the Mouheneenner people. The location of Franklin Square would have originally been the waters edge.

“*Two Islands* will bring to life the rich and multi-layered history of the Park, celebrating and interpreting its cultural and heritage significance, emphasising the co-existence of cultural histories”.

“The use of water craft to symbolise Indigenous and settler colonial cultures has a deep resonance with the histories of both cultures,” said Mr Lehman.

*Two Islands* represents the City’s first major public artwork that publicly recognises Tasmania Aboriginal history, with the City investing \$100,000 that includes concept development, construction and installation of the artwork.

Dr Helyer has an international reputation for large scale sound sculpture installations with his work represented in collections around the world including projects at Normans Landing and Wireless House (Sydney); Vox Aura (Finland) and Din Ding Dang Dong (Seoul Olympic Park).

Dr Helyer will work together with Aboriginal canoe-maker Tony Brown to create the work, and to provide opportunities for other Aboriginal people to contribute to the sound sculpture. The artwork will be built locally using Tasmanian materials and fabricators including the Tasmanian Wooden Boat Centre and Barking Owl Audio.

A development application for the artwork will be lodged in the coming weeks and subject to planning approval, installation is projected for mid-2017.

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