



PRESS RELEASE  
28th September 2012  
- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -

### DEADLIEST DANCER OF THE YEAR

In recognition of her major contribution to dance in Australia over a career spanning 30 years and still going, Yolngu woman, Guypunura “Janet” Munyarryun – dancer, mentor, teacher, cultural consultant and grandmother from the remote homeland community of Dhalinybuy in North-East Arnhem Land - took out the coveted Deadly® for **Dancer of the Year** at the Sydney Opera House this week, in the 18<sup>th</sup> Award ceremony that showcases the outstanding achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Janet, a member of the Wangurri Clan who was raised at Garthalala homeland with traditional dance and ceremony an integral part of her life, remembers the time as a young girl back in the early 1970’s when she walked across country with her two grandfathers and parents to Dhalinybuy and started building their homeland community from scratch,

‘We had the axes out and chopped down all the trees and made an airstrip. That was the first thing.’ It was Janet’s mother who first encouraged her to take their culture and knowledge south and share it with the world. “Mum used to say, you take it, follow your career in dance. Keep going. It’s important. And if I stopped, she always encouraged me to stay with it, go back to my career. Now I see my children doing the same. It makes me very proud.”

For the second year running, Janet’s daughter Rarriwuy Hick [*Wrong Skin, Badlands*] is nominated for Best Actress in this year’s Deadlys®, as she continues to carve out a promising career in both dance and acting for stage and screen, whilst her son Guruguru Hick is auditioning for NAISDA.

Janet, along with her younger brother Djakapurra Munyarryun, were founding members of Bangarra Dance Theatre and helped create many of the early shows that defined the company’s style, mixing the contemporary with traditional Yolngu culture. She was also instrumental in starting up the AIDT (Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Dance Theatre) where she instructed traditional Yolngu dance to the likes of Christine Anu, Stephen Page and Paul Hick, the father of her two children.

---

Northern Territory  
PO BOX 2004  
NHULUNBUY, NT, 0881

[bungguldjama@gmail.com](mailto:bungguldjama@gmail.com)  
+ 61 (0)2 90116682  
+ 61 (0)427 193022

New South Wales  
PO BOX 643  
KATOOMBA, NSW, 2780



Proudly associated with Laynhapuy Homeland Schools Bunggul Djama Arts Alliance has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body.

*Community, Culture and Imagination are our Primary Resources*



Janet's career has taken on a new dimension this year. Following a May tour to the UK to perform at Windsor Castle for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations, she has been working with her brother and other elders in their community to establish a Yolngu Performing Arts company, *Bunggul Djama*; a homeland-based Arts Alliance that focuses on Training and Employment opportunities in Performing Arts for homeland youth and help prepare the new generation for expressing our culture in traditional and contemporary ways, for wide audiences, all around the world.

"We want to share our success within the community and homelands, to inspire the young ones and help them understand how to go about creating new works and performances and tour them around the world. That's what we have done, me and my family, down south. Now we want to do it in Arnhem Land, Yolngu way. Starting with Learning on Country, through homeland schools, *Bunggul Djama* will help the next generation achieve self-determination in the arts, on their own terms

Before arriving at the SOH celebrity-studded Award Ceremony, Janet was en-route from rehearsal at Mirramu (Elizabeth Cameron Dalman's dance studio on Lake George where they are creating a new "Morning Star" work that opens in March next year, to her homeland in Dhalinybuy for a barpuru (funeral) that just begun for her grandmother, who was very close to her.

"Our culture is alive today because of the homelands. My grandmother wanted to be buried there, at Dhalinybuy. so the children and grandchildren remember her. That's important. Keeping our culture alive. Mari's barpuru will bring many clans together to celebrate the song lines connected to her. They all carry a part of it. Put them together we become stronger, our children are learning and our culture stays strong."

FOR MORE INFORMATION & TO ARRANGE INTERVIEWS PLEASE CONTACT

KEVIN LUCAS  
[lucaskevin@me.com](mailto:lucaskevin@me.com)  
0427 1930 22

(HI-RES PHOTOS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST)

---

Northern Territory  
PO BOX 2004  
NHULUNBUY, NT, 0881

[bungguldjama@gmail.com](mailto:bungguldjama@gmail.com)  
+ 61 (0)2 90116682  
+ 61 (0)427 193022

New South Wales  
PO BOX 643  
KATOOMBA, NSW, 2780



Proudly associated with Laynhapuy Homeland Schools Bunggul Djama Arts Alliance has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body.

*Community, Culture and Imagination are our Primary Resources*