

## Josie Kunoth-Petyarre, *MCG*

Pictures Collection H2010.139

Acquired 2010

Josie Kunoth-Petyarre is an artist from the Anmatyerre language group. She was born in 1959 at Utopia, in the Northern Territory. During the 1980s she was a part of the batik movement that came out of Utopia, which both featured and helped to establish Aboriginal women artists. She first came to prominence in her own right around 2007 and is now recognised as an accomplished painter in the Utopia tradition.

This work was painted during 2007–08 and is simply titled *MCG*. It was purchased with the assistance of the State Library Foundation. Kunoth-Petyarre's style is light, bright and colourful, and it expresses the joy of watching a game of footy (football) at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Members of the artist's family, Dinny Kunoth Kemarre and Rosie Kunoth Kemarre, are depicted in the painting.

Although Australian rules football was developed in Victoria, it has become important to Aboriginal people all over Australia, including from Utopia. The game was developed by Tom Wills around 1858. It is interesting to note that in the Western District of Victoria, where he grew up, Tom played with Aboriginal children from the area, and local Aboriginal people played a game called *marngrook*. Many say Wills was influenced by that game, as well as by the English game of rugby that he played when he went to the famous school of that name. *Marngrook* was a ball game played between Victorian Aboriginal clans, who were identified by their totems: cockatoos, wombats, eagles and the like.

Indigenous knowledge is passed on through oral tradition, and Hartley Briggs, a member of the Indigenous Victorian Aboriginal Research Group (IVARG) at the State Library, holds that *marngrook* was possibly more than just a game, and may have been employed as a means of settling disputes after the disruption of traditional society. He says the most identifying feature of the game of *marngrook* is 'the mark', known by Aboriginal people as *mamaki*, which differentiates it from other ball games that were played at the time.

Similarly, Bill Hunter, another fellow of the IVARG, talks about early members of his family in the late 1800s who played football with a number of clubs in the Melbourne and Healesville areas. He tells of one of his relatives, Richard Rowan, who invented the 'screw kick'. This was later perfected by Fred Hunter to become the 'banana kick', which is still used to great effect in the modern game.



Josie Kunoth-Petyarre, MCG [Melbourne Cricket Ground], 2007–08, acrylic on linen, reproduced with the artist's permission. Pictures Collection, H2010.139