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INFRASTRUCTURE**

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**MICK DE BRENNI MP
MINISTER FOR HOUSING AND PUBLIC
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**SCOTT STEWART MP
STATE MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

**CR JENNY HILL
MAYOR OF TOWNSVILLE**

MEDIA RELEASE

Townsville's Jane Hawkins to cast JT in bronze for new stadium

Townsville artist Jane Hawkins has been commissioned to sculpt a life-sized statue of NRL star Johnathan Thurston to stand in the northern entry plaza of the new North Queensland Stadium.

Jane will team with Dean Rusling, owner and operator of Chalkos Fine Arts Foundry, the same company that fabricated the bronze statues of the football legends Arthur Beetson, Mal Meninga and Alfie Langer that stand at Suncorp Stadium in Brisbane.

Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said that her Government had worked with Johnathan and Samantha Thurston, Townsville City Council and the stadium architect to select the winning design.

"It's a fitting tribute to have a statue of JT's NRL Grand Final-winning field goal in honour of his contribution to the sport and the North Queensland community.

"The life-sized bronze statue will stand tall in the northern entry plaza and welcome locals and visitors who attend games and events at this world class stadium," she said.

Federal Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure Alan Tudge said the Morrison Government's \$100 million commitment was helping make the North Queensland Stadium a reality.

"The Morrison Government is proud to be helping to deliver this world-class stadium while also celebrating one of the all-time great Queenslanders," Mr Tudge said.

Artist Ms Hawkins said JT is an outstanding ambassador for North Queensland, Indigenous culture and the community.

"It is a great honour to create a tribute to a man who is such a legend both on and off the football field," she said.

"As a local resident of Townsville and an avid follower of the North Queensland Cowboys, I am excited by the project and being able to celebrate JT.

“I watched him kick that winning field goal in 2015 with my breath held, and time seemed to be suspended in that moment.”

Member for Townsville, Scott Stewart, said having a Townsville local craft the JT statue was something of which his entire community could be proud of.

“Ms Hawkins, a well-established North Queensland figurative sculptor, has a proven reputation for creating realistic life-size bronzes.

“Locals know her for her statue of British colonial businessman Robert Towns, after whom Townsville is named, that stands near the Victoria Bridge in the city’s CBD.”

Minister for Housing and Public Works and Sport Mick de Brenni said the statue will represent the inspiration that JT has provided and will continue to provide, to the next generation of sports stars and community leaders.”

“From the outset, the North Queensland Stadium project has been focused on maximising opportunities for North Queenslanders and the statue of JT is no different,” Mr de Brenni said.

“Jane Hawkins and the local sub-contractors and suppliers she engages will join more than 488 other North Queensland business that are already engaged in the project’s extended supply chain.

“I’m pleased that this project sets up a great local artist to work in the famous Queensland Chalkos Fine Arts Foundry, where NRL greats are cast in bronze.”

Dean Rusling owner-operator of Brendale-based Chalkos Fine Arts Foundry said he was thrilled to once again be working with Jane with whom he has completed many other bronze commissions over the past 25 years.

“It’s always an honour to be selected as the foundry that casts NRL legends in bronze,” said Mr Rusling.

“We took pride in being able to cast and finish Mal, Artie and Alfie, and now to be doing JT is extra special,” he said.

“The process will ensure a high-quality finish to the likeness of this legend that Jane sculpts.”

Federal Member for Herbert Phillip Thompson said he was delighted to see a local artist selected to portray a local sporting hero.

“The North Queensland Stadium project has been owned by North Queenslanders from its inception, and it’s great they will be able to make their mark with this statue.” Mr Thompson said.

Federal Minister for Youth and Sport Richard Colbeck said immortalising JT would help inspire generations of Queenslanders to take up the sport and stay physically active.

“Our greatest sporting heroes are often our children’s greatest inspirations and I hope this serves as a lasting reminder of both JT’s talent and his commitment to helping the local community get active.”

Townsville Acting Mayor Les Walker said JT deserved the recognition as one of the greatest sporting champions of a generation and for his community work.

“Last year we temporarily renamed Townsville’s iconic Goat Track the JT Track, but it’s fitting that he has a permanent monument like this one,” Mayor Hill said.

The North Queensland Stadium is a joint project of the Queensland Government, Australian Government and Townsville City Council and is supported by both the National Rugby League and the North Queensland Cowboys. The stadium forms part of the Townsville City Deal signed in December 2016.

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Attachments:

Image of successful artist's concept design

