PM would be wise to hear premiers’ prayers

PHILIP Ruddock and Peter Costello may have a gemeinschaft or sense of comradeship in the bush but it seems government politics is not their strong point. The prime minister and his deputy were given a shock of cold water this week by the Commonwealth state premiers. The premiers have agreed to an extraordinary meeting in Melbourne next week.

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Blacks damn art of illusion

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Much of her art has represented Aboriginal people in a Western figurative realist style.

However, according to an article in the current issue of the art magazine, Art Monthly, which revealed the existence of Eddie Bururrup, several years ago, she started to develop a looser, more "elemental" style of working.

"Her (gallery director's) daughter," said the article, "saw that they make much more sense in the Aboriginal context" and "Bururrup emerged as a fully developed artistic persona towards the end of 1994".

Since, about six Eddie Bururrup paintings have been displayed with several sold for about $600 each, in her daughter, Ms Perpetua Hobcroft's Durack Gallery in Broome.

A reproduction of one of Eddie Bururrup's works was sent as a Christmas card to Mellors, who requested that a work be included in the Native Titled exhibition.

But Eddie Bururrup's story was not only told through his art. Durack also wrote a monograph, quoting him at length in kriol from so-called transcripts such as the description of the story of his intended Sulman entry: "One for early day time where allabout seemin Gudea first time — e makim cobber-cobber — big one — an 'e run that song all around."

Someone who signed the name "Bururrup" and described the diptych work in kriol on the entry form also entered the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory's 1996 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award and was selected, as are most entries, for hanging.

The chairwoman of the National Indigenous Arts Advocacy Association, which protects Aboriginal copyright, Ms Kay Mundine, said the people who bought the work certainly believed it was by someone it wasn't.

"But apart from the legal side, there is whole moral issue about what she's doing. The question of people from other groups taking cultures and using them for their own commercial or artistic purposes — it shows a complete lack of understanding and respect for the people who she says she's representing."

The appropriation, said Mr Kevin Kelly, director of the Kununurra-based art centre, which represents Kimberley Aboriginal artists, was outrageous, totally against Aboriginal lore and would be discussed fully in weeks to come.

However, Durack's motives remained even more of a puzzle because she was obviously revered by her many Aboriginal friends in the area, he said.

"When she comes to town, she's just treated like a queen by her Aboriginal friends," he said.