



ARTIST Helen Norton with her quirky Mona Lisa of the North West.

'Doctor' to benefit from local artist's exhibition

HELEN Norton has come a long way in eight years, and her latest exhibition of paintings, entitled *Wings and Wire*, is a strong testimony to her uncompromising style and commentary on her what she sees as love, life and death in the North West.

Intended as a commemoration to 60 years of RFDS involvement in the Kimberley, the exhibition in fact goes much further.

"You'll see a few images of aeroplanes, but mostly the collection focuses on life as it is lived by bush people in the bush," Ms Norton said.

"In fact it is much more

a tribute to the people who live, love and die in the isolation of the bush - those who are assisted by the RFDS, rather than the service itself.

"Paintings like *Shopping with Grandma* for instance celebrates those we might criticise or who we often take for granted, yet they are amazing in their resourcefulness.

"Many of the images, like *Australian Man Burial*, are like a scene from an intense drama, set against the canvas of the landscape.

"Many others salute the gentle cattlefolk and the little ladies - coping against all kinds of odds."

Born in Melbourne, Ms Norton left the city at

just 16 years of age bound for the Nullarbor Plain and, for the next ten years, worked at every kind of outback labour.

This experience still acts as a huge store house of information that she draws on to create her impressions of the land and its inhabitants.

Add to this bold brush strokes, vivid colours and a robust sense of humour, and you have the essence of a Helen Norton painting.

There is nothing delicate or orthodox about her work.

The elements of caricature and naivety in her style both empower the message and enhance the sense of immediacy

her pictures give the viewer.

"I think the most important images are the fresh, spontaneous ones," she said.

"For me, it's not important to have a person in proportion, but rather to capture their essence."

Ms Norton has been collecting prizes for her work since 1988, when she was awarded the Kimberley Art Prize for an oil painting.

She has also held several successful exhibitions of her work since then - first in Broome and other Kimberley centres, followed by those in Perth, Adelaide and Darwin.

Plans for the future include a joint exhibition in Adelaide,

commemorating the centenary of women's suffrage in Australia; another joint exhibition in Sydney entitled *Women from the West*; and her first overseas exhibition - a solo in Vale, Colorado, USA in December this year.

The *Wings and Wire* exhibition is being presented in conjunction with Gallery Jila at the Cable Beach Club Pavilion, Millington Road.

It will be opened on Saturday July 9 by Eileen Coppin, and continue until August 1. Percentages of sales will be donated to the RFDS for the purchase of additional aeromedical equipment.