

Olsen offers painting and poetry in honour of ABC's Lockyer



ALAN PRYKE

John Olsen yesterday with Nick, left, and Jamie Lockyer

SALLIE DON

JOHN Olsen made the final touches to his latest painting of Lake Eyre only a few days ago. *Approaching Lake Eyre* was his memorial to Paul Lockyer, the ABC journalist who died in a helicopter crash alongside cameraman John Bean and pilot Gary Ticehurst at Lake Eyre in August last year.

In the work, the helicopter is just visible above the horizon, dipping slightly towards the earth.

The painting was unveiled yesterday at the launch of Lockyer's book, *Lake Eyre: A journey through*

the heart of the continent, at the Tim Olsen Gallery in Sydney.

Olsen, 84, recited a poem at the launch that he wrote in Lockyer's memory. "This is about the loss of these three great men, modern explorers," Olsen said.

His poem, *The Immediacy of the Appeal*, described the "malevolent Kudimuka", a dreamtime spirit that lies beneath Lake Eyre.

"Head of a kangaroo / body of a snake / that allows / no place for man / or / beast," the poem read.

Olsen was supposed to have been on board the flight that killed the three men, but pulled out because he was recovering from heart surgery. "You've got to have

the gods smiling down on you somewhere," he said.

Lockyer had hosted the launch of Olsen's exhibition *Lake Eyre — The Desert Sea* at the same gallery in August, just days before he left for what would be his final visit to the region.

Olsen wrote the foreword for the book, which tells the history of the lake alongside a series of vivid photographs.

Among the audience for yesterday's launch were friends, family and former colleagues of Lockyer's, including ABC managing director Mark Scott and independent MP Tony Windsor.

It was a bittersweet event for

Lockyer's wife, Marie, and his sons Nick, 27, and Jamie, 29.

"Before he departed for his final trip to Lake Eyre, Dad left a manuscript for us to read as our task for the next 10 days," Jamie said. "It wasn't until I started reading it I realised his passion for the lake."

A journalist of more than 40 years, Lockyer was born in the town of Corrigin in Western Australia and served as a correspondent in Washington and Asia. He also covered last year's Queensland floods, and was part of the first media crew to fly into Grantham to report on the devastation of the Lockyer Valley.