

# artery

No 7 | WINTER 2008

Maximus  
goes to Venice 2009



## FROM OUR CEO



PHOTO: STUART SPENCE

**One of the things that I admire most about our artists** is their openness to new ideas and new ways of making art. It's innovation of this kind that places the arts sector at the very heart of Australia's creative industries.

This edition of *artery* puts the spotlight on innovative arts practice, inspired by the Creative Australia stream at the recent Australia 2020 Summit, the Australian Government's review of the national innovation system, and the Australia Council's current focus on supporting arts content for the digital era.

Now just a year away, the fresh face of Australian visual arts will be on proud display at the 2009 Venice Biennale, with chief representative – Shaun Gladwell – and the four early career artists combining their talents in a spectacular showcase of the most innovative Australian art ever at this major world event (cover story, opposite).

While Shaun and his cohorts put new media to alternative uses, elsewhere, other Australian artists are developing cutting-edge applications of new technology. The popularity of the mobile phone, in particular, has exploded in recent years and it's great to see artists engaging with the new communications medium as a means of artistic expression.

A fine example is the *Portable Worlds* exhibition which is touring the country and whose Tasmanian leg I was honoured to open recently (see page 8). Developed by the Australian Network for Art and Technology, it can be appreciated in the physical gallery and/or on the mobile phone screen. Yet another exciting initiative, the so-called new Mobile Enterprise Growth Alliance, is further developing the mobile art genre (see page 10).

In our own way, we've also been innovating at the Australia Council; generating fresh, new ideas and examining new ways of working more efficiently. Our business process review over the past few months is almost at an end, and from 1 July, we'll be transforming our organisation and operations to provide better service to the arts sector (see page 5). In particular, a streamlined organisational structure and systems and processes will help us maintain funding levels for artists over the coming years and ensure supporting the arts remains at the very heart of everything we do.

I'm also pleased to welcome several new governing Council and arform board members to our organisation. See the back page for details and read more about one of them, the academic and innovation expert Professor Brad Haseman on page 4.

I hope you enjoy our winter read!

Kathy Keele

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**Shaun Gladwell, *Apology to Roadkill 2007*.**

PHOTO JOSH RAYMOND. COURTESY THE ARTIST AND ANNA SCHWARTZ GALLERY.

# Maximus goes to Venice 2009



Shaun Gladwell, *Apology to Roadkill* 2007.

PHOTO JOSH RAYMOND. COURTESY THE ARTIST AND ANNA SCHWARTZ GALLERY.

Shaun Gladwell's position as one of Australia's top young artists has been confirmed with the announcement that he will be Australia's chief representative at the 2009 Venice Biennale.

Shaun Gladwell will represent the face of contemporary Australian art with his latest series of works called *MADDESTMAXIMVS* in the Australian Pavilion.

The piece is an evocative suite of five thematically interrelated videos, with sculptural and photographic elements. Inspired by the highly stylised, post-apocalyptic world of the Mad Max movies, the work encapsulates a sense of the Australian outback while retaining an international perspective.

Shaun will use *MADDESTMAXIMVS* as a starting point to develop the 2009 exhibition. 'I wanted to include both Australian and international content and to place this within the broader context of art history,' he explained.

In one of the series, *Apology to Roadkill*, a motorcyclist still wearing his helmet, holds a dead kangaroo on the edge of a red dirt road. 'It's an image I have stuck in my mind from childhood,' said Shaun, 'but it also recalls the work of '60s artist Joseph Beuys, and the history of landscape art before that.'

Shaun made headlines as an emerging artist at the 2007 Venice Biennale in the *Think with the Senses Feel with the Mind* exhibition. His series of slow-motion skateboarding videos, set against a Bondi Beach backdrop, brought him international critical acclaim.

He has also exhibited in major shows in London, the Yokohama 2005 Triennale of Contemporary Art, and biennales

in Busan and São Paulo in 2006. He will present work at the upcoming Sydney and Taipei biennales.

Seen as the world's oldest and most prestigious art exhibition, the 53rd Venice Biennale runs from June to November 2009. It is also the last biennale to have national representation.

'In a globalised world, the issue of national identity is a real challenge, particularly when artists already have so many complex, composite identities. It's a privilege to be part of this debate,' said Shaun.

Contemporary Australian art will also be represented at Venice by a group show, *Once Removed*. Comprising a group of early career artists it will be curated by Sydney's Felicity Fenner and held for the first time at The Ludoteca, a former convent in the city's Castello district.

Artists Vernon Ah Kee, Ken Yonetani, Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro will present a series of installations unified by themes of displacement, Indigenous and environmental issues. The exhibition will also reveal how the artists' diverse cultural backgrounds inform their art practice around shared concerns.

The Australia Council's visual arts board made the selection of the artists with advice from the Australian commissioner Doug Hall AM and three senior curators – Linda Michael, Tony Ellwood and Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev.

Australia has been consistently represented in the Venice Biennale for more than three decades, with financial and management support from the Australia Council.

>> [www.australiavenicebiennale.com](http://www.australiavenicebiennale.com)

# profile



PHOTO: KEITH SAUNDERS

## Arts drive social innovation

Professor Brad Haseman is the Australia Council's new community interest representative and chair of the community partnerships committee. The former head of drama at QUT, he is the co-author of *Communicate Live!* and *Dramawise*. Brad has been involved in drama and arts education for more than 20 years.

### **You're the assistant dean of research in the creative industries faculty at Queensland University of Technology. What does your role there entail?**

I co-ordinate and support the research endeavours of about 100 academic staff. It's an intensely rewarding job in an environment where staff and research students from a range of disciplines focus on significant cultural problems. Our research in cultural studies, cultural mapping, policy development, innovation policy and the creative industries is internationally recognised. Alongside this strength we have a large program involving practice-led research which is ideally suited to artists and creative practitioners. More than 150 staff and research students work through their practice to investigate new tools and techniques for contemporary art making and devise fresh ways for artists and audiences to interact.

### **There has been a lot of talk lately about the role of the arts in fostering innovation throughout society. Where do you see the arts fitting in the innovation agenda?**

Currently there is a disconnect between what we do in the arts and what we may contribute to the national innovation agenda. Over the past decade, government policy has located innovation within the science, engineering, technology and medical sectors but it is vital to make artists and their creative processes part of this agenda. This is particularly important now because it is clear that most innovation is fostered within complex environments, as part of complex systems.

Many artists work in exactly the same settings, in complex, messy worlds which they manage using diverse forms and distinctive methods. National innovation policy will be impoverished if it excludes artists and their creative habits of mind. This is especially the case with user-led and demand-driven innovation.

### **At the recent Australia 2020 Summit, the arts in education was another important area of discussion. What benefits do you see drama providing for young people in their education?**

It's significant to have such public recognition by these influential groups of people. Arts education should feature much more prominently in our education system.

Art has its own intrinsic value. Because aesthetic experience works through and fuses together emotion, memory, cognition and the imagination it is one of the most 'mindful' things we can do. For this reason alone, it should be part of all education programs.

Art also has proven extrinsic value. When we study in and through the arts we do much more than learn about the arts. For example studies on whole person development have found a causal link between engaging in drama activities and the oral language development of a child. The arts can also provide pathways into understanding health and well-being. In this sense the arts can serve as a kind of 'teething ring' on which complex personal, social and cultural understandings can be formed.

Many schools struggle to stay relevant in the technologically connected world of young people. In our 'googling' world which offers an abundance of answers, the arts can help sharpen the questions that really matter. The arts can make a distinctive contribution to education, for creative processes encourage teachers to work alongside students as co-creators and frame meaningful questions which require significant answers.

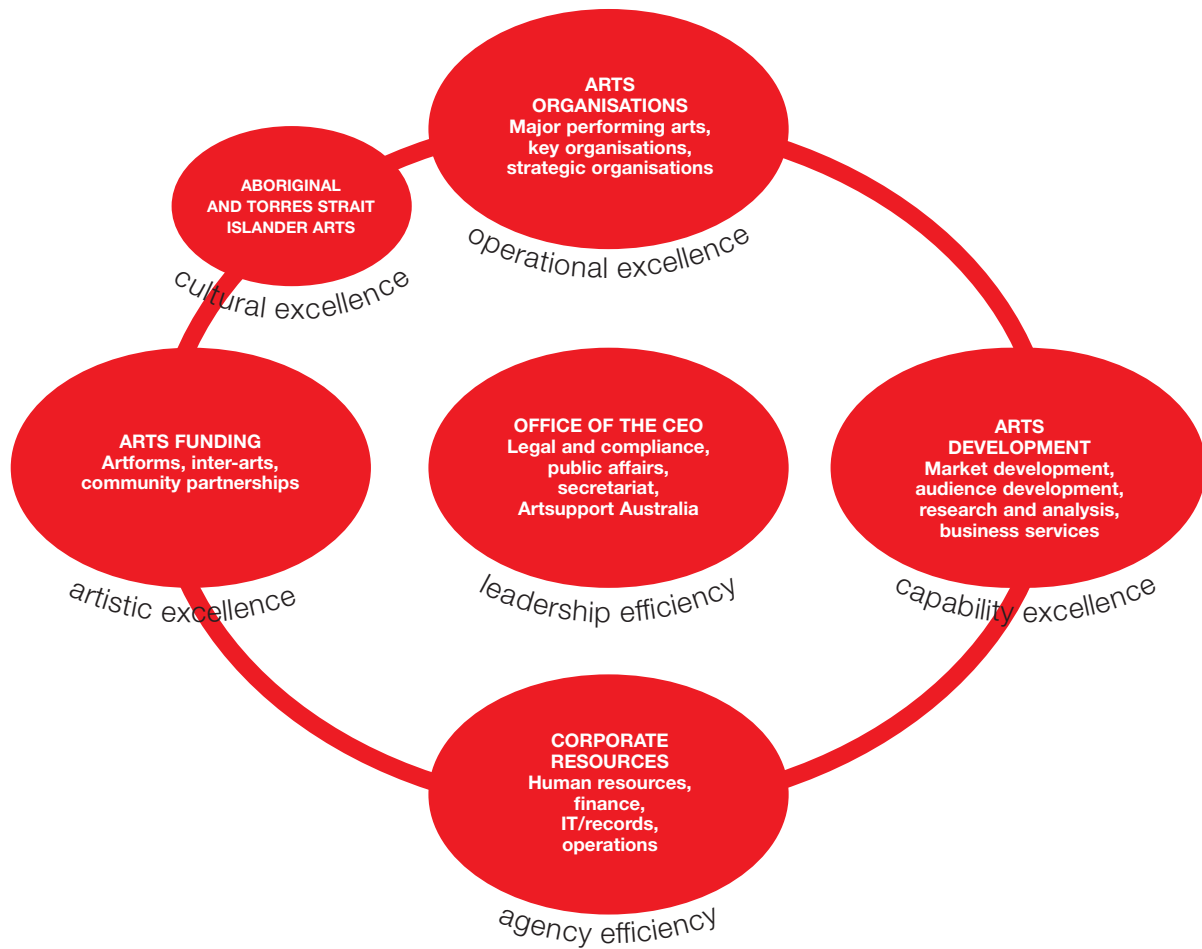
### **What do you see as being some of the key challenges facing the arts sector over the next decade - in the lead-up to 2020?**

Well as I see it, the main issues that the arts face in the mid-term relate to the economics of the arts, the nature of community engagement, particularly through various kinds of partnerships, and changing audience tastes as digital modes of delivery become more popular and possible.

How artists engage with the potential of the digital platform is particularly important. It offers extraordinary opportunities to distribute work easily and cheaply and we are seeing young audiences in particular demanding greater interactivity and user-led participation and engagement across a range of creative platforms.

This, coupled with the fact that we are living in a time which believes that creativity is a key driver of innovation, economic sustainability and social change, makes for a potentially powerful time for the arts. For me, one key to a vibrant future lies in the partnerships which can be brokered between artists, educators, government, health, universities, NGOs, industry and philanthropists. If we can establish partnerships and commitments of appropriate scope and scale, we will see the arts prosper and shape genuine creative communities. Of course our understandings of what the arts are and do will change in such dynamic environments but that's OK - the arts are too agile and durable to stand still for long.

# Streamlining the Australia Council



The Australia Council for the Arts is reviewing the way it works and is structured, in order to deliver more benefits to the arts community.

The Australia Council is committed to the issue of artists' income – through increased funding to individuals and organisations, and by helping them identify alternative income streams; in fact, it's one of our six strategic priorities. We do this in a number of ways including new proposals to government, working with philanthropists and foundations and collaborating with state and territory arts agencies – to name just a few.

Since I joined the organisation more than 16 months ago, I have been focused on how we do things inside the Australia Council. This has been with a view to maintaining, if not increasing, funding levels for artists over the coming years, and to ensure that supporting the arts is at the core of everything we do.

Last calendar year, for example, we identified \$1 million in efficiencies to increase grants to artists. In the lead-up to this year's Budget, and faced with an additional, whole-of-government efficiency dividend of two per cent, we have had an even more intensive look at the way we work through a business process review. We examined all our processes, grant management systems, project management and how we are organised.

Seven teams of Australia Council staff have identified new ways to process grants, manage projects, and provide key services to the arts community. It has also resulted in a change to the way we are organised.

As of 1 July, we will have three new divisions – arts funding, arts organisations and arts development. These three areas, together with the existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts division, make up the core of the organisation. They are supported by the office of the CEO and the corporate resources team.

The arts funding division will include all the current peer review boards, committees and panels, including community partnerships. This will ensure we are managing applications, assessments and grants in the most efficient way. Artistic and practice excellence is the focus of this area.

The arts organisations division will manage and administer funding of the 29 major performing arts companies and some 140 key organisations. This will allow us to provide focused support to arts organisations across the country and have a more complete strategic view of the sector. Artistic vibrancy through organisational excellence is this group's focus.

The arts development division will focus on supporting the sector in the fields of audience and market development, research and information and strategy development. Other areas of support will be developed based on the evolving needs of the sector. Sector development and excellence will be this division's focus.

This streamlined structure will transform the way the Australia Council works in support of the arts.

— Kathy Keele

# Bombproof face of Books Alive



Michael Robotham  
PHOTO: COURTESY OF MICHAEL ROBOTHAM

Top-selling Australian crime writer Michael Robotham is the Books Alive ambassador for 2008. His new short novel *Bombproof* is the feature title for the campaign.

Books Alive is Australia's largest annual promotion of reading, featuring a host of activities to tempt Australians to pick up a book. Beginning in July, the campaign includes a list of recommended reads, a giveaway feature title, promotions, advertising and author tours.

'It's a great campaign because it's aimed at promoting reading and not just book buying,' said Michael Robotham.

*Bombproof* is this year's giveaway title. True to the spirit of the campaign, it promises to be a novel that can't be put down. Written exclusively for Books Alive, it is available only with the purchase of one of this year's recommended reads.

'I'm thrilled with *Bombproof*,' said Michael. 'I think it's an intelligent crime thriller as well as being an old fashioned romp through London's murky underworld. It's fast, funny, hip and violent – I had a really great time writing it.'

The Books Alive list of 50 recommended reads covers recent fiction, non-fiction, historical novels and children's books.

Selected by a panel of critics, booksellers, publishers and the Australia Council, the list includes both established and lesser-known authors, and has a large Australian content.

Michael Robotham was on the 50 great reads list only a couple of years ago with his second novel *Lost*. 'The program really helped raise my profile in Australia. I was first published overseas and was in the odd position of being lesser known here,' he said.

Michael Robotham's entry into crime writing reads suspiciously like a fairy tale. At the 2002 London Book Fair he submitted the first 100 pages of *The Suspect*, attracted instant attention and won a major international publishing deal. The novel has now sold more than one million copies worldwide, won numerous awards and been translated into more than 20 languages.

'I didn't actually set out to be a crime writer,' said Michael. 'It might sound naive, but I just thought I was writing an interesting story. It came as quite a shock when the label was applied. I'm comfortable with the title though – there are some brilliant people writing in this genre.'

Michael Robotham began as a cadet journalist on the Sydney *Sun* before moving to London's Fleet Street. He ghostwrote more than 15 autobiographies for celebrities like Ricky Tomlinson, Rolf Harris, Lulu, Geri Halliwell, Tony Bullimore and Tracy Edwards.

'I always wanted to write my own stuff, but doubted whether I had the discipline. Ghostwriting was a good test. Until you sit down and try to do it, you don't really know what it's like.'

In the four years since *The Suspect* was published, Robotham has cemented his career as a full-time crime writer, producing three more novels, *Lost*, *The Night Ferry* and *Shatter*, as well as *Bombproof* for Books Alive.

Not one to keep a low profile, he has already started his next novel, a follow-up to *Shatter*. 'I have some great new characters to play with, which is always exciting. It's like looking at the world through new sets of eyes,' he explained.

As Books Alive ambassador, Michael Robotham is embarking on a national author tour of major metropolitan and regional centres in July and August.

'I'm honoured to be part of the campaign,' said Michael. 'Writing is a solitary profession and the tour is a great opportunity to get out and meet readers.'

'My advice is to read something once a year outside of your comfort zone. Pick up a volume of poetry, a science fiction novel, or a romance. You'd be surprised. Try one of the 50 great reads and you'll definitely find a good one.'

'At the moment, for example, I'm reading the British poet Simon Armitage. His work is astonishingly funny, poignant and brilliantly observed.'

Books Alive is an Australian Government initiative, developed through the Australia Council for the Arts.



Graeme Murphy's *Swan Lake*.  
PHOTO: JIM MCFARLANE

## Artists helped to go digital

ABC TV's expanding digital delivery platforms will deliver greater access to more of the Australian arts.

A new strategic partnership between the Australia Council for the Arts and ABC TV will develop a number of initiatives, spanning the breadth of arts genres and practice, in a range of formats, including live performance.

The partnership is part of the Australia Council's strategic priority to foster arts content in the digital era.

ABC TV will present this arts programming across the schedules of ABC1, ABC2, ABC online, Second Life, internet channels, and through mobiles, vodcasts and user-generated content (UGC).

The first project in the partnership was a live broadcast of Graeme Murphy's *Swan Lake*, performed by The Australian Ballet at Sydney Opera House on April 9. Screened live on ABC2, it was also beamed direct to the Australian Film Commission's digital cinemas around Australia and to Federation Square in Melbourne.

One project already launched from the new strategic partnership is My Favourite Australian, which invited the public to nominate a collection of outstanding Australians whose portraits will be hung in the new National Portrait Gallery from December.

The public voted in two categories – the Popular category for well-known Australians, and the Unsung Hero category for those who might deserve recognition. The public vote will lead to the commissioning of 10 new media artists to each create original portraits. Following the exhibition, the digital portraits will be presented for broadcast as short videos on ABC TV.

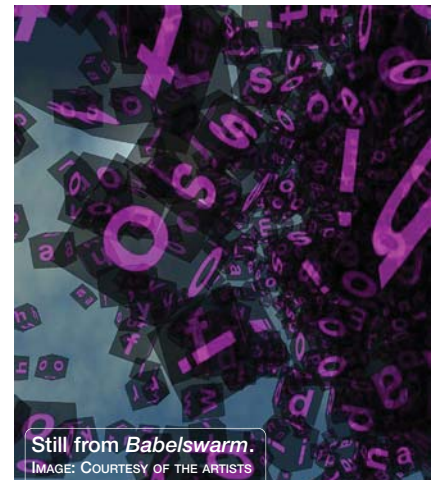
## Management boost for dance and theatre

Dance and theatre groups are being provided with professional management via a series of funding partnerships between the Australia Council for the Arts and state arts funding agencies.

The new Management and Production Services (MAPS) project is designed to produce and manage selected companies so they can create and tour their works more effectively, around Australia and overseas.

Leading independent dance and theatre groups in Western Australia are the first to benefit, with the Australia Council and WA State Government appointing Performing Lines to provide a new management and production service based in WA.

Other MAPS managers include Strut and Fret in Victoria and a partnership between Metro Arts and Brisbane Powerhouse in Queensland.



Still from *Babelswarm*.  
IMAGE: COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS

## *Babelswarm* launched

Australia's first Second Life artists-in-residence have unleashed *Babelswarm* on an unsuspecting world.

The 3-D project, a metaphor for the Tower of Babel, uses voice recognition software to convert the spoken words of virtual and real participants into three-dimensional letterform images in an evolving tower of words.

The artwork, by writer Justin Clemens, visual artist Christopher Dodds, and musician/3D artist Adam Nash, was launched simultaneously in Second Life and the real world, namely the northern NSW town of Lismore. The Australia Council backed *Babelswarm* with a \$20,000 Second Life artist residency – the first organisation to publicly fund a virtual artwork.

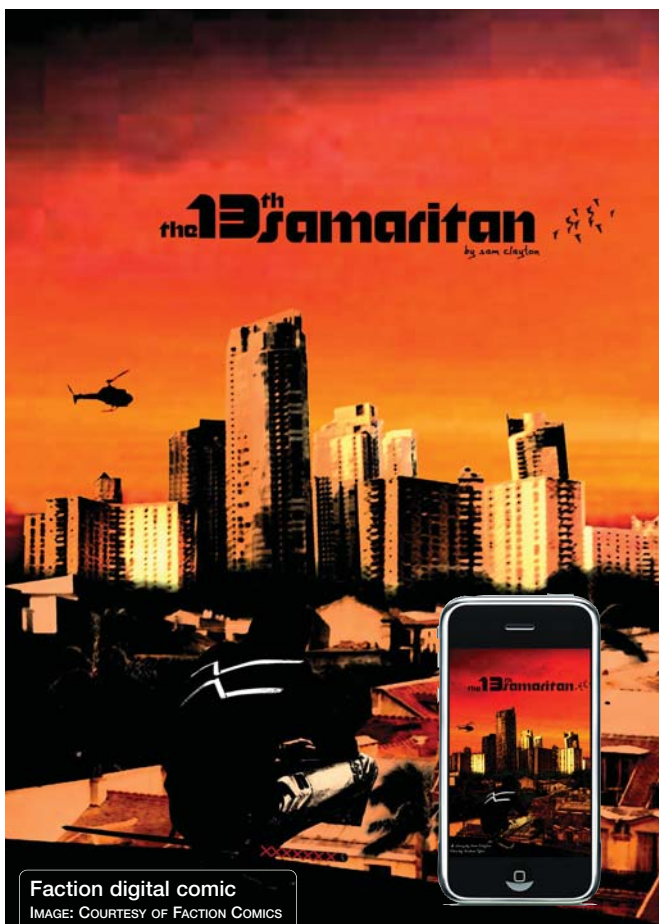
Following *Babelswarm*, the Australia Council has cast its virtual world net even wider, with the announcement of up to \$30,000 for a collaborative arts project in any massive multi-user virtual environment (MMUVE).

The MMUVE It! initiative offers a team of up to three artists the opportunity to develop interdisciplinary artwork in a MMUVE of their choice.

With more than 73 million participants in MMUVEs such as EverQuest, Second Life and World of Warcraft, the project offers artists great scope to develop innovative work.

The successful team of artists will be required to harness both the chosen virtual world and real life audiences, engaging the human body through an interface that allows movement. The resulting work will also be exhibited publicly in Australia.

# mega engages mobile art



In the fast-changing and ever-evolving worlds of information and communication technology (ICT), implementing mid- to long-term strategies can be problematic.

So when a cutting-edge project creates a successful ICT development and marketing model for mobile technologies that can be re-applied year after year, it is no surprise that the industry stands up and takes notice.

The Mobile Enterprise Growth Alliance (mega) is a national project aimed at advancing the functionality and delivery of information through mobile phone technology by partnering industry leaders with the new cohort of digital content artists, programmers and entrepreneurs.

'As far as we know no one has been able to do this before,' said mega's NSW and Victorian manager Justin Brow. 'We've built a working framework that allows us to simply insert the technology of the day.'

What began in 2006 as a successful South Australian incubator program to increase the size and capability of the industry has been expanded to Sydney and Melbourne this year with funding from the Australia Council.

As the project was developed in conjunction with TAFE and universities, it is founded on strong pedagogic principles and participants can now earn credit points towards undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

mega's mentors share their experience and expertise with selected teams of ICT aspirants through a comprehensive series of hands-on workshops that cover the full

development and marketing process from the germination of an idea right through to the pitch.

'Our presenters live and breathe this technology,' said Brow. 'If they don't know what's market-competitive they don't eat.'

Brow believes the mega pilot in South Australia has contributed to a more dynamic industry by providing a better injection of skilled staff, and raising the profile of the mobile industry as a viable career path.

'The digital content industry is currently the fastest growing economic sector internationally and, within that, the mobile sector is the standout performer,' he said.

'In the internet and mobile industries, Australia can hold its head high. We are an incredibly creative, innovative and technically literate country. Several companies that started out in Australia are now leading their fields internationally – and these are the guys who are contributing their time and expertise to mega.

'The challenge now is how do we, as a society, maintain the industry at the cutting edge? Through projects like mega, there is no reason why we can't become the Silicon Valley of the mobile content and application industry.

'It's very exciting. Our selection committee was extraordinarily impressed by the calibre of applicants who are all really good at their game, so we're looking forward to an amazing year.'

Faction Comics is one participant eager to engage the possibilities of the mega program. Faction is in the final stages of developing a global online comic and manga community with ongoing user-generated publications where the comic world can visit 'to create, share and rate'. The site will give artists the opportunity to submit their stories and, potentially, be published and paid.

Team leader Sam Clayton intends to use the opportunities presented by mega to take Faction Comics beyond the internet and onto the mobile networks.

'mega loved the idea and said it would translate well. It's an idea we've had for a while and this will give us the chance to fast-track it,' Sam said.

'There has been a manga explosion on mobiles in Japan. Comics were always a portable proposition so mobiles are a great way to read them. What we want to do is come up with a way to read comics on mobiles without losing any artistic merit.

'Essentially it will end up being a software thing. I want to be able to build this so we can go to a software developer straight after mega.

'We would love to see it up and running by the end of the year.'

# Fremantle's great Scott



Bevan Honey, *Apparition*, 2008, Stirling Highway Bridge  
PHOTO: BEWLEY SHAYLOR

Every AC/DC fan knows it ain't no fun waiting around to be a millionaire – but do they know where Bon Scott's pearl of rock wisdom originated?

The full line from the track which featured on the band's 1976 hit, 'Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap', made its debut in a letter Scott wrote to his wife, her sister and his brother.

The appeal to brother Graeme for \$50, penned on the back, never made a lyrics sheet despite his very rock and roll pledge that, if the money got through, 'I'd love ya forever'.

The letter to wife Irene Thornton, or Spunk as he addressed her, is one of 20 from the Aussie rock icon that went on display for the first time as part of a multimedia retrospective on Scott's life, times, influences and music.

The Bon Scott Project brought together the stories of fans, friends, fanatics and females who played important roles in his life and music.

Painting, sculpture, drawing, collage, photography, video, an installation and a ground breaking online blog were all part of the project curated by Jasmin Stephens at the Fremantle Arts Centre. Nineteen artists took part in the six-week celebration.

There was even a night set aside for a diverse panel to discuss the effects of tight jeans on cultural trends.

Of course, there wouldn't be a Bon Scott Project without gritty, loud, sexually aggressive music, so a cover band featuring Dom Mariani, Steve Joines, Vanessa Thornton, Clair French and Warren Hall was commissioned to supply the back beat.

Made possible by funding from the Australia Council, the City of Fremantle, WA's Department of Culture and Arts and the Gordon Dowling Foundation, the show attracted fans from around the world to Scott's home town in May and June.

Bon Scott personified working class rock of the 1970s and '80s, right down to choking on his own vomit before his band had finished conquering the world. AC/DC went on to become one of rock's most successful acts.

They sold more than 200 million albums, including 68 million in the US. Their mid-'80s effort, *Back in Black*, is the fifth-highest selling album in US history.

AC/DC were loud, aggressive and in your face but, thanks to Scott's writing, there was also a poetic quality to their early work. All those elements shine out of his personal writing, according to letters curator, Katie Dyer. In it, she says, there's hilarious recognition of the fact he's 'pissing off' the women's liberation movement and might as well get on with it.

**He's very sweet-natured, he's tender, he's generous and he's funny.**

'He's very sweet-natured, he's tender, he's generous and he's funny,' she said. 'It all comes through and so does his very Australian view of the world and way of expressing himself.'

Katie, who listened to AC/DC in her teenage years but admits to a preference for Boy George and punk, says her involvement in the project has caused her to reassess Bon Scott and the band.

AC/DC has even found its way back onto high rotation on her car stereo. But does she like them any better?

'Yeah, I do, now that I have come to like the man,' she said.

>> [www.fac.org.au](http://www.fac.org.au)  
>> [www.bonscottblog.com](http://www.bonscottblog.com)

# SPARK gives Ming room to move



Ming-Zhu Hii  
PHOTO: COURTESY SPARK

Ming-Zhu Hii is one of the young Australian artists who have kick-started their professional career through the SPARK mentoring program.

Teaming up with mentor Melanie Beddie, Ming-Zhu developed the performance piece *TWO* for four work-in-development showings in Melbourne. Excerpts were presented in Sydney at PACT and Carriageworks in May.

A graduate of the Victorian College for the Arts, 27-year-old Ming-Zhu has worked with the Melbourne Theatre Company, Sydney Theatre Company, La Mama and Here Theatre and clocked up numerous television credits.

'*TWO* is an exploration in form and the line between the theatre and the domestic space', explained Ming-Zhu. 'We worked with four actors, installed the piece in a domestic space and used video playback on television monitors with the footage imposed on live performance and vice versa.

'A small audience of eight continuously moved through the space and influenced the timbre of each performance. In one scene, an actor hid behind a bathroom door awaiting a voice cue.'

On several nights, curious audience members opened the door first, causing a whole section of the text to change. The performance had a sense of danger and uncertainty to it, and the audience picked up on that excitement.

'We incorporated the video installation in the space and recorded after and before the last two performances. This was edited into a show reel combining documentation and monitor-installation footage, and set to a 13-minute piece of Bach solo violin, an excerpt of which was used in the showing.'

Ming-Zhu chose noted actor, director and dramaturg Melanie Beddie as her mentor for the 10-month program.

'I worked with Melanie when she directed the 2007 production of Ibsen's *Ghosts* with Branch Theatre Company, and knew I could learn a lot from her,' Ming-Zhu said.

'It was a great opportunity to have her collaborate on a project that I drove. Melanie provided dramaturgical and directorial advice and we fed off one another creatively.

'Support from Melanie and SPARK gave me a strong sense of self-confidence and opened up doors and opportunities that I wouldn't have had otherwise. The funding gave me flexibility and Melanie got me out of the "struggling actor" mentality I had boxed myself into. She instilled in me the idea that practicing one's art is a necessity, not a luxury.'

The SPARK mentorship program helps young artists establish a professional career in their chosen area. It provides practical experience, skills training, national profiling support and direct funding to create and develop their own projects. In 2007, 12 artists engaged in dance, media, theatre and visual arts took part.

**If we continue to gain support from arts bodies and theatre companies, the artistic fabric of this country will be extraordinary in 10 years time.**

Ming-Zhu said the program 'gave me fantastic opportunities to network and witness the work of my peers. I was genuinely gobsmacked by the quality of all the final performances and saw what a strong and fertile diversity we have in the arts in Australia.'

'If we continue to gain support from arts bodies and theatre companies, the artistic fabric of this country will be extraordinary in 10 years time.

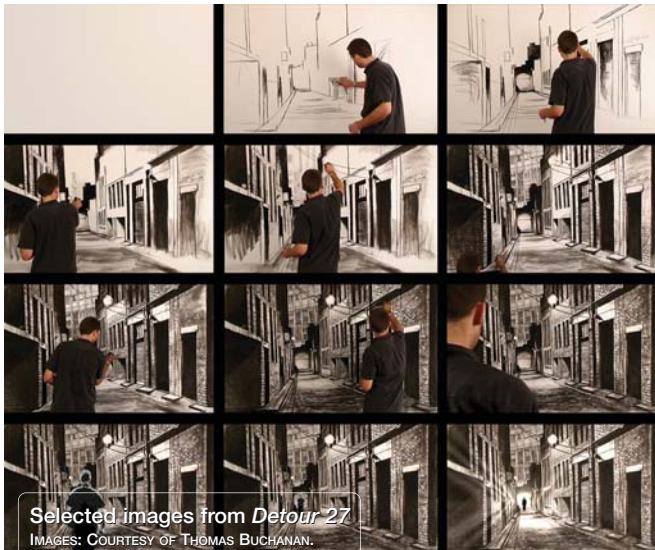
'I'm now seeking funds to mount *TWO* in a public capacity. It's difficult working with several actors, and I'd like to be able to fully pay all of my creative collaborators.'

Ming-Zhu will return to acting later this year for a remount of Louis Esson's play *The Time Is Not Yet Ripe* at the Courthouse Theatre in Melbourne. She plans to direct Guy de Maupassant's *The Horla* and is developing several other projects.

SPARK is part of the Australian Government's young and emerging artists initiative and is managed by Youth Arts Queensland.

>> [www.mingzhuhi.com](http://www.mingzhuhi.com)  
>> [www.yaq.org.au/spark](http://www.yaq.org.au/spark)

# Get a gallery in your hip pocket



The reality of a truly portable, interactive art gallery may soon be just a phone call away according to the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT).

ANAT's *Portable Worlds* project endeavours to achieve just that by employing the mobile phone as a platform to create, share and exhibit art.

Fee Plumley, program manager of ANAT's Portable Platforms and Emerging Technologies, sees *Portable Worlds* as an opportunity to prepare current, emerging and future artists and media producers for the avalanche of technological possibilities about to descend upon us.

'We're right on the tipping point,' she said. 'As we speak, mobile phone technologies worldwide are shifting from a niche market to a mass market through the convergence of technologies and the reduction of carriage costs.'

Plumley is a passionate advocate of the mobile phone as a dynamic social and cultural medium and has been working around the globe since 2000 to advance its use in the creative industries.

By deploying artists as 'experts of the unknown', *Portable Worlds* seeks to explore and chart the emerging domain of the mobile phone – a hybrid space Plumley regards as a potentially 'natural' habitat of the artist.

'Artists are known for their intrepid innovation; for exploring new platforms and paving the way for the mainstream. Media artists have been at the forefront of technological developments, jumping on the latest distribution platforms and repurposing according to their needs,' Plumley said.

'It is important for independent producers to feel a sense of ownership over these spaces. While we remain reliant upon the traditional broadcast networks, we will remain under their thumb.'

Brought to Australia from the UK earlier this year by ANAT to develop and foster the use of this fast-emerging technology in the local arts landscape, Plumley is currently overseeing a touring exhibition of 'mobile' works by established artists that demonstrate the creative potential of the mobile medium.

The *Portable Worlds* artists were commissioned to experiment and produce works that utilise mobile phones for both 'display and creation – exploring connection and intimacy, portability and community, scale and distance'.

Touring nationally in 2008 and 2009, the exhibition is aimed at school children and young media producers, encouraging them to reciprocate in-kind via the free Bluetooth interface with activities designed to facilitate the development of small screen literacy skills and creative practice, with an emphasis on demystifying and engaging with available technology.

Participating artist Thomas Buchanan had no problem getting his head around the concept.

'It's such a great idea, I mean I've got half my portfolio on my mobile,' he told *artery*. 'I love watching how other artists use new technology – especially if they don't know how to.'

Thomas has been experimenting for some time with the fusion of traditional representational art and performance so *Portable Worlds* provided the perfect opportunity to take it up a notch.

**While we remain  
reliant upon the  
traditional broadcast  
networks, we  
will remain under  
their thumb.**

In his contribution, *Detour 27*, Thomas manages to elegantly mesh his drawing with performance, video and animation – a collision of modes that simultaneously positions him 'both at the edges of drawing practice and within the traditional idiom'. Through a clever twist in the story's tail, all four media converge in a seamless finale.

'The animation at the end allowed me right into the work – and every artist wants to step into their own realm,' he said.

Like many artists, process is paramount to Buchanan who describes his as a constant foray into the unknown – a process he was able to abstract in *Portable Worlds*.

'The best thing about being an artist is the struggle and the slippage; the merging of the foreign and familiar to create new spaces in the world. I'm just scraping the surface here. I feel like an archeologist and I can't wait to get to the bones.'

# Devastations to destinations



L-R: Tom Carlyon and Hugo Cran with Conrad Standish  
PHOTO: JOE DILLWORTH

Popular Melbourne band Devastations will perform with hot US indie act, Blonde Redhead, on an upcoming AIDS benefit album.

The collaboration is nothing new. The Victorian trio has just finished supporting Blonde Redhead – actually a Japanese vocalist and two Italian-born musicians – on a 12-night stand across Europe.

The chemistry built on a trip underwritten by an Australia Council International Pathways grant, which resulted in the invitation to play on the Red Hot album, being put together in the US.

Guitarist-vocalist Tom Carlyon says the tour, through Germany, France, Scandinavia and the UK, was the best the band has done since it got its act together in 2002.

'Blonde Redhead is a fantastic band and each night was a bit of a highlight for us,' he told *artery*.

His personal favourite was playing La Bataclan at 50 Boulevard Voltaire, one of Paris' oldest and best-known show venues.

'We are not in this business for kicks and what we will be doing now is following up the contacts we made every night in Europe,' Tom said.

'We were promoting ourselves on tour and it felt very positive; easily the most successful tour we have completed.'

Devastations – Carlyon and Hugo Cran with Conrad Standish out front – has been playing and recording to critical acclaim in Australia and Europe, since releasing their self-titled first album in 2004.

It was lauded by *Rolling Stone* Germany as the best debut album of that year.

*Coal*, in 2005, was nominated for an Australian Music Prize as was last year's made-in-Berlin effort, *Yes, U*, which also picked up at least one music industry best album award.

Their early music was variously described as dark, sinister, gothic and suave and it was little surprise when they opted to base themselves in Germany. Early days, they toured with acts like the Tindersticks and Einstürzende Neubauten and were commissioned to do a film soundtrack at an old Berlin radio station. Frontman Standish memorably described its 'octogenarian' security guards as 'left over from the Nazi era'.

But Devastations members have always brought a broader, more made-in-Australia tone to their work.

They put the finishing touches to *Coal* in Melbourne with inputs from colleagues like Leone Carmen, Bic Runga, and Kieran Box from the Blackeyed Susans.

For what it's worth, music critics have already detected a more accessible sound to *Yes, U*.

But the band won't be pigeonholed as glumrockers, or anything else for that matter, despite peppering their latest offering with tracks called 'Mistakes', 'Black Ice', 'The Saddest Sound' and 'Misericordia'.

'I don't call it anything, it's just music,' Tom said.

'Our influences are always changing, in fact, they change every week and we're not just influenced by other musicians.

'It's as much who you are and what you're doing at the time.'

Devastations has every reason to be called an international act these days with Hugo still living in Germany, Conrad based in England, and Tom back in Melbourne, wielding a paint brush by day to help pay the bills.

When he spoke to *artery* he was preparing to fly back to Europe where Devastations had been booked to appear at Barcelona's four-day Primavera sound festival.

From there, he said, members would rehearse, record and refine the next stage of their career.

# African mentor for Tara June



Tara June Winch  
PHOTO: NEWSPIX/ALAN PRYKE

Young Wollongong writer Tara June Winch has been selected as the protégé of the Nobel Prize-winning novelist, poet and playwright, Wole Soyinka.

Tara June was the only Australian shortlisted for the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative across all categories of dance, literature, film, music and visual arts.

At 24, Tara June Winch is already a representative of youth and literature in Australia. She is of Wiradjuri, Afghan and English descent and a member of the Australia Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts board.

In May she travelled to Nigeria to meet Wole Soyinka alongside three other protégé hopefuls: Petrina Crockford, Vanessa Garcia and Courteney Petrosino. 'What we all had in common was a mixed heritage and an interest in identity and the politics around this,' said Tara June.

The group spent a week together, 'talking, sharing meals, drinking wine and just hanging out.' Tara June had one-on-one meetings with Wole Soyinka, and got to know a little of Nigeria and the Yoruba culture he comes from.

'It was amazing to be sitting around one of the great writers. I never believed I'd be chosen. I thought I was just a community flats girl and I didn't deserve any of it.'

Tara June Winch will soon move to either the US or Europe to be closer to her mentor for the one-year program. During the year she will work on a second draft of a novel as well as other projects. 'I want to develop the more political aspects of my writing, be more vociferous with Indigenous issues and the value of Indigenous culture to the rest of the world.'

Tara June Winch's new novel focuses on the importance of language, and how this relates to issues of belonging. 'I'm curious about what it means to belong, about where you come from and how this connects to who you are. The book explores love and relationships of all types between men and women, not just romantic ones. The main characters include a lunatic, a lover and a linguist – but I can't give away more than that!'

**It was amazing to be sitting around one of the great writers. I never believed I'd be chosen. I thought I was just a community flats girl and I didn't deserve any of it.**

'I feel I am still very much coming out into the world and into my writing. I'd like to look at other genres of writing – Wole is also a playwright, for example. My goal is to develop the tool I've chosen – writing – to become louder in what I say.'

Tara June's first novel, *Swallow the Air*, was published in 2006 and explored issues of family, belonging, growing up and stepping into the world. It picked up a string of awards including the David Unaipon Award at the Queensland Premier's Literary Awards, the Dobbie Award, *The Sydney Morning Herald* Best Young Australian Novelists Award and was shortlisted for *The Age* Book of the Year.

'I fell into writing accidentally. I didn't formally study it, but I wrote poetry and used to hang around the State Library in Brisbane to read and watch films. One day I saw a notice on the wall that announced a young writers' prize. My entry later became the first chapter of *Swallow the Air*. UQP got in touch and encouraged me to keep going. I did, although there were many times I wanted to stop.'

'I hope this encourages young people, whether educated or not, to put themselves out there, to be open to opportunity, and to accept both success and disappointment.'

Tara June Winch is the second Australian writer to gain a place on the program. In 2003, Sydney writer Julia Leigh worked with mentor Toni Morrison. Leigh has just published her resulting novella, *Disquiet*.

# Laughter born of a broken heart



Mark Bin Bakar as Mary G  
PHOTO: RODNEY STRATTON

When Kimberly artist Mark Bin Bakar stepped up to receive his West Australian of the Year award in December, he had intended to graciously accept and quietly slip away.

That is until alter ego Mary G, beloved Queen of the Kimberly, gatecrashed proceedings.

'What?' she said at the time, 'are they giving it to anyone now? What's he done anyway? You know he's just been a parasite on my back.'

Mark chuckles at his artistic dilemma. Mary G has been dragging the musician and reluctant comedian around the public domain since hijacking his Kimberly radio show almost a decade ago.

'She came into my studio one night and just took over; she sacked me then put me on as her token producer,' said Mark.

Mary G's straight-shooting satire immediately resonated with audiences throughout the Kimberly leading to her own national TV series on SBS, which consolidated her appeal in mainstream Australia.

Having just received a two-year Australia Council Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts board fellowship, Mark is now preparing to take Mary G out on the road, particularly to the people and communities who made her famous.

'I'm deeply honoured by the recognition from the board and the Australia Council through this fellowship which acknowledges my small role in the Indigenous community in helping to bring the country together.

'The fellowship will allow me to further my skills and my abilities; to nurture and expand the capacity and production of the Mary G show and continue the good work of the Australia Council.

'There's a huge demand in isolated communities for Mary G – but most importantly she is a great platform for new and emerging artists. A lot of young artists in the communities look up to Mary G, so it is good she can give them a hand up.

'Generally when you go into isolated communities everything is cut back for budget reasons. We will take a full production into places where some people have never seen a show like this in their life – a full light show with a proper sound system. We will get those talented artists out there up on stage with Mary G, with all the fancy stuff, and let their community see them like that.

'After that we hope to grow the show for international audiences and take it to the world.

'I never calculated or planned Mary G. She happened by accident and was borne out of creativity. Where she has taken me is overwhelming sometimes, how she affects human beings, how she touches people, from petrol sniffers to suicidal people, from little kids loving the songs to elderly people who come up and pinch my cheeks... for some reason she touches everybody.'

Mark has written widely and eloquently about the women in his life, particularly his mother and his wife, so perhaps it is no coincidence he should find his public voice through a female character.

'I can say things as a woman that Mark can't say. Aboriginal women can laugh at each other's misunderstandings.'

But as Mark revealed to *artery*, it is his maternal grandmother who ultimately inspires Mary G.

'She's the main woman in my life that I draw upon because I never met her and I wish I had. She was a full blood Kitja woman and had no choice in whether she could keep her own child... and died of a broken heart.

'I yearn and cry my heart out for her and the suffering she took to the grave so I feel compelled [through Mary G] to be her strength again in this world, in this time, and this life.'

Mark sees Mary G's role in the reconciliation process in helping all Australians celebrate their differences – by educating mainstream Australia and returning some pride to Aboriginal communities.

'Really what we're doing is tapping into the subconscious mind of people through humour and helping them to see the beautiful side of Indigenous Australia and to make people aware of the real situation out there without making them feel guilty about it.

'People walk out and go "Wow! What an experience that was – and I laughed at it. Am I bad? I can't be a bad person because Mary G made me laugh" but it gets them thinking.'

# Cultural rebirth in Wadeye



Wildflower. Back row L-R: Salome Nabarlambarl, Quintina Nagarrgurba, Dominic Narorrnga. Front row L-R: Jake Burrunali, Vanessa Nabarlambarl, Jean Burrunali, Natasha Namundja

PHOTO: SAM KARINIKOS COURTESY OF WHITEHOUSE STUDIOS.

The Top End's Wadeye community is celebrating a successful conclusion to its inaugural cultural festival following a vibrant week of traditional and contemporary practice and performance.

Crowd favourites Wildflower (pictured), comprising younger family members of Indigenous rock band and fellow festival performers, Nabarlek, closed the festival.

Assisted by the Australia Council's Artsupport Australia program, the Wadeye community recently secured \$240,000 funding over three years from Rio Tinto's Aboriginal Fund to run the festival. The festival aims to both revive traditional cultural practices and restore the local arts, music and dance scene that has been in decline since the demise of the community's local club last decade.

Held over seven days in June, the festival marked a turning point in Wadeye's response to the intense and often unfair political scrutiny and mainstream media attention imposed on the community over the past decade.

Where the 'creation' of Wadeye itself in the 1930s led to the disconnection of many people from their traditional homelands, the festival provides an autonomous means to rebuild community cohesion across tribal and generational groups.

In this context, the festival should provide benefits to the Wadeye community long beyond the life of the funding and exemplifies the kind of philanthropy Artsupport Australia aims to foster in the community.

Rio Tinto's Aboriginal Fund, which currently distributes \$1.8 million annually, seeks to establish and support sustainable programs in Aboriginal communities and with Artsupport Australia's assistance has achieved that.

According to the Thamarrurr Regional Council, the management organisation for the Wadeye community, the festival's primary objective is to spark a 'cultural renaissance' within the widespread community. Situated 340km south west of Darwin,

Wadeye is regarded as the largest Indigenous community in the Northern Territory and is home to some 2500 Indigenous people comprising at least 23 tribal and seven language groups within three main ceremonial groups.

Where many cultural festivals cite public interest or profit as the key criteria for a successful event, the Wadeye Community Cultural Festival committee spent this festival focussing on their own people within a 250 km radius. That included Wadeye's 10 adjoining homelands and the nearby communities of Palumpa and Peppimenarti.

The festival committee said invitations to outside visitors would be extended in future years.

The Thamarrurr Regional Council has set itself the dual objective of re-establishing the regular practice of traditional language and culture within the community and restoring Wadeye's previously strong track record of contemporary music, performance and visual arts activity.

During the six weeks leading up to the festival, experienced artists from within the community held cultural and skills development workshops within each clan group. These included traditional dance workshops, bush trips with elders and a series of contemporary music, visual art and media production workshops. The production of several short films encapsulated the spirit of the festival as elders – traditional keepers and tellers of the clan's stories – worked with aspiring young filmmakers to reinterpret old narratives through new media.

Culminating in a week of performances and exhibitions, this year's festival celebrated the histories and the hopes of the Wadeye people and laid the groundwork for an expanded program next year through ongoing cultural activities and mentoring programs.



Federal Arts Minister Peter Garrett, Mark Bin Bakar, Doris Pilkington Garimara with Red Ochre Award, Margaret Harvey, Thérèse Rein. PHOTO: SHARON HICKEY

## Rabbit-proof fence author wins award

Australia's most valuable Indigenous arts award – the \$50,000 Red Ochre Award – has gone to Doris Pilkington Garimara AM, author of *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* and lifetime campaigner for reconciliation.

The Red Ochre Award, presented by Thérèse Rein, wife of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, pays tribute to an Indigenous artist for their outstanding, life-long contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts.

The Australia Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts board chair Dr Chris Sarra said it was timely to honour an author whose stories have helped bring a nation together.

'The Red Ochre Award celebrates the achievements of those who have fought to keep our culture strong,' Dr Sarra said.

'Doris' remarkable storytelling has a strength and dignity that has allowed all Australians to imagine what it would be like to walk – both through the desert and through life – in another's shoes.'

Doris' celebrated novel – *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* – on which the 2002 Philip Noyce film *Rabbit Proof Fence* was based, has been translated into 11 languages worldwide.

Minister for the Arts Peter Garrett also presented two fellowships, valued at \$45,000 each year, for two years, to Torres Strait Island performer Margaret Harvey and West Australian of the Year Mark Bin Bakar (see story on page 14).

## New faces on governing Council

The governing Council of the Australia Council has two new faces – Ms Rosalba Clemente who chairs the theatre board and Professor Brad Haseman who is a community interest representative and chair of the community partnerships committee.

Minister for the Arts Peter Garrett announced their appointments for three-year terms from March 2008.

Mr Garrett also announced the reappointment of Dr Chris Sarra to the governing Council for a one-year term, also from March 2008. Dr Sarra is the chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts board.

Ms Clemente lectures at Flinders University Drama Centre and has extensive experience as an actor, director and playwright. She was artistic director of the State Theatre Company of South Australia from 1999 to 2004.

Professor Haseman is a published academic writer known internationally for his work in drama education, arts in education, applied theatre and process drama. He is currently professor and assistant dean (Research) at the creative industries faculty at the Queensland University of Technology.

Mr Garrett also announced appointments to five boards of the Australia Council. These were: Ms Elizabeth Walsh – dance board, Ms Mary-Ellen King – major performing arts board, Mr Matthew Lutton – theatre board, Ms Lyndal Jones – visual arts board and Ms Fay Zwicky – literature board.

## Australia Council welcomes Budget arts initiatives

Australia Council chief executive Kathy Keele has welcomed the Rudd Government's first Budget which features significant wins for the arts.

'The arts fared well in last month's Budget announcement with some particularly positive outcomes for community arts, arts and education and young and emerging artists,' Ms Keele said.

'The Government showed its support for the arts by handing down a budget that delivered on key elements of its election platform.'

Ms Keele applauded two initiatives worth \$11.8 million over four years, one that supports young and emerging artists and another that brings established artists into schools.

'This will help groom the next generation of practicing artists and better engage them with the arts.'

'The Government's confirmation of the \$10 million Creative Communities initiative also demonstrates its commitment to giving all Australians the opportunity to experience the arts in the places where they live.'

'The Australia Council warmly welcomes these initiatives which will help enrich the cultural lives of all Australians.'