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# real2reel

## New CEO and Board appointments

Federal Minister for the Arts and Sport, Senator Rod Kemp recently announced a number of new appointments to Film Australia.

Daryl Karp was announced as Chief Executive Officer effective from July 2004, with Steven Skala joining the Board in June 2004.

"Ms Karp's extensive experience as an executive producer of documentaries and factual programs, combined with her background as an independent producer, will ensure that Film Australia continues to capture Australia's heritage through documentaries," Senator Kemp said.

Previously Head of Factual Programs at ABC Television, Daryl Karp has also worked as an independent filmmaker, producing programs for ABC and SBS, and working as a consultant to PBS's Oregon Public Broadcasting in the United States. A founding member and director of the World Congress of Science Producers, she also served on the board of the Australia Korea Foundation.

"I am tremendously excited by the opportunities Film Australia provides to the independent documentary sector and look forward to the next phase in Film Australia's growth," said Ms Karp.

Daryl Karp replaces Sharon Connolly, who announced last October that she would step down at the conclusion of her contract.



Daryl Karp

Steven Skala will assume the position of Chairman of the Board from 1 September 2004, following the retirement from the Board of the current Chairman, Robert Fisher.

"Film Australia is one of the unsung jewels of the cultural sector," said Mr Skala, "and I welcome the opportunity of being part of it."

A commercial lawyer, with more than 20 years experience with law firm Arnold Bloch Leibler, Mr Skala is Vice Chairman, Australia and New Zealand, of Deutsche Bank.

"He brings a wealth of cultural management experience to Film Australia through his association with the Australian Ballet, as the current Chairman of the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, the board of the Channel Ten Group, and through his involvement with International Council of the Museum of Modern Art in New York," said Mr Kemp.

Senator Kemp thanked Sharon Connolly for her achievements, wishing her well in future endeavours. He also thanked Rob Fisher for his work as Chairman since 1999, saying, "Mr Fisher's association with the Australian film and television industry for the last 20 years has been a great asset to the Board of Film Australia."

Eve Mahlab stepped down as Deputy Chair at the end of her term on 26 July 2004. A replacement is yet to be announced.

For more information on the current Board visit the Film Australia website on [www.filmaust.com.au/about](http://www.filmaust.com.au/about)



Steven Skala

## AFI nominations

Two Film Australia National Interest Program productions have been nominated for AFI Awards, to be announced on 29 October.

*Lonely Boy Richard* has been nominated for Best Documentary. This one-hour film, from producer Denise Haslem, writer/co-producer Rose Hesp and director Trevor Graham, is an intimate account of one man's journey to jail.

Tony Vaccher, John Patterson and David Bridie have been nominated for Best Sound in a Non-Feature for *Land of the Morning Star*. Produced by Janet Bell and written and directed by the late Mark Worth, the film tells the story of an extraordinary land—a place known as Netherlands New Guinea, West Papua, Irian Jaya and Papua—and its rich and turbulent history.

Both programs were produced with the assistance of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

*More award news on page 2.*

## A farewell message from Sharon Connolly

In the course of some memorable farewell functions, I have thanked many of those with whom I've worked during the past 12 years. They include those I knew as a Film Australia Executive Producer from 1993 to 1997, and the Board members, staff, filmmakers, broadcaster and funding agency colleagues, and Government and departmental representatives who've supported Film Australia and its activities during the time I've been its Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director.

With their help much has been achieved: strong and relevant documentaries, recognition and the first direct Government funding (since Film Australia's incorporation) for its library, facilities and distribution activities, the upgrading of the Lindfield site, the establishment of a Melbourne office and an altogether more secure future for the company.

But I think the achievement of which all who've been part of the last seven years can be most proud is that together we've clarified and reasserted the idea of Film Australia as a community service.

*Continued on back page.*



## Awards and festival news

*Dhakiyarr vs the King* received the prestigious Rouben Mamoulian Award at the Sydney Film Festival's Dendy Awards in June.

At the Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) Awards in Melbourne, *Wildness* won the Best Documentary—Science, Technology and Environment Category while *Silent Storm* was a finalist in the Best Documentary—Social and Political Category.

*Wildness* will screen at the 8th Wilderness Congress in Anchorage, Alaska in September 2005, and at Sguardi Australiani 3—Face of Australia in Italy along with *Sadness*, *Slow Food Revolution*, *Muddy Waters—Life and Death on the Great Barrier Reef*, *Mabo—Life of an Island Man*, *Uncle Chatzkel*, *The Diplomat*, *Thomson of Annhem Land* and *In the Realm of the Hackers*.

*Troubled Minds—The Lithium Revolution* screened at July's Melbourne International Film Festival along with *Mr Patterns*, which won the Emerging Australian Filmmakers Award for Nic Testoni, Jo Plomley and Catriona McKenzie. *The Pilot's Funeral* was shown at the Brisbane International Film Festival, also held in July.

*Land of the Morning Star* has been included in the travelling program for Mountainfilm on Tour.

In June, *Lonely Boy Richard*, *Dhakiyarr vs the King*, *Magnetic North*, *Home Sweet Home*, *When Will the Birds Return*, *Darwin—The Friendly City* and *The Back of Beyond* were part of the Reel Territory Film Festival, held in the Northern Territory, and *Women of Utopia* screened at Festival Globalising The Netherlands.

A selection of Australian documentaries screened in May at the Beijing Dashanzi International Arts Festival, organised by the Australian Embassy Beijing, including *Facing the Music*, *Rats in the Ranks*, *Cane Toads*, *Tosca—A Tale of Love and Torture*, *Buried Country* and the distribution title *Emily's Eyes*.

*Facing the Music* continues to screen as part of the Embassy Roadshow, a travelling film festival showcasing contemporary Australian films to the world through Australian embassies. The film has screened to audiences in Nairobi, Warsaw, Kuala Lumpur, Manila and Tel Aviv.

*China Dolls* and *Sadness* have been invited to the Pride International Film Festival in Manila in August.

## Mr Patterns

Geoff Bardon—a schoolteacher who helped start one of the most significant art movements of the 20th century—has been described as the right man in the right place at the right time.

It was in the 1970s that he headed to the Western Desert town of Papunya, 250 kilometres west of Alice Springs.

"My dad said: 'What's a young man doing in a place like Papunya?'," says Geoff Bardon in *Mr Patterns*. "Most people were going to Paris."

Leaving Sydney, Geoff packed up all his possessions in his blue Kombi. "I was going to build a world of my own," Bardon explains in this one-hour documentary, made under Film Australia's National Interest Program.

And Geoff Bardon—who died in mid-2003, soon after being filmed—did help to build a new world: the world of Papunya Tula art, where Aboriginal artists used western materials to paint their traditional dot designs. Within Geoff's lifetime, it had taken the international art world by storm.

In his work as a teacher, Geoff saw his students drawing their traditional designs and symbols in the sand, and he encouraged them to draw these "patterns" in the classroom.

Says Bardon: "I didn't set out to rock any boat, but it just seemed silly to have the young people drawing cowboys and Indians all day when they had an intact culture of their own."

His work with the students won the support and confidence of the tribal elders who became the "painting men" of Papunya.

For filmmaker Nic Testoni, who wrote *Mr Patterns* with Jo Plomley, making the film came about through a family connection—Geoff Bardon had been a lifelong friend of his father.

"It's very true that Geoff was the right man in the right place at the right time, but he only became a catalyst because of the open and sensitive person he was," says Nic, who was a child when his father invited Geoff to come to their home to stay and work. Geoff lived at the Testoni home while finishing one of his first books, based on his time at Papunya. Says Nic: "The story is that Geoff turned up at our house in Wollongong with a manuscript under one arm and a frozen turkey under the other."

Bardon once presented the Testoni family with a dot painting. "That was my introduction to Aboriginal art," Nic remembers. "I knew nothing about it, but that it looked magical and mysterious to a child. I was only vaguely aware—through that painting that hung in the lounge room for years—that Geoff was involved in Aboriginal art."

In fact, Geoff Bardon is widely regarded—by the Papunya community and the art community—as the person who triggered the Western Desert art movement.

Growing up in Wollongong, Nic Testoni went on to become a Logie winning actor, best known for his role in *Home and Away* for more than four years. It was after *Home and Away* that he headed off to New York University with Jo Plomley to study

documentary production. When Nic and Jo returned to Australia, they set up their production company Reel World Productions, starting the search for their first project.

"Our lecturer in New York said that for your first film, you need to do a story that you—and no-one else—can do," recalls Jo. It was when she and Nic were sitting in a café with Nic's father, John Testoni, that the family association with Geoff Bardon was discussed—and the idea of *Mr Patterns* was born.

The unique relationship with Geoff gave Nic and Jo and their fellow producer, Megan McMurchy, access to Geoff Bardon's substantial personal film collection, photographs and his memories. Geoff entrusted them to tell his story for the first time on film. On one of their trips to Geoff's home, Nic and Jo came across a pile of 16mm film canisters of footage Geoff had shot in Papunya in the 1970s—using much of it in *Mr Patterns*.

"The footage he recorded shows the relationship he had with the people. It's an amazing record of that time and is so indicative of Geoff the filmmaker and the man. The intimate nature of the footage—the way the kids and adults look into the camera and smile—gives you an insight into the esteem in which he was held," says Jo.

Geoff says in *Mr Patterns*: "When I was at Papunya I learnt about friendship in a mature way...where I could be respected and give respect."

With a small crew, Nic and Jo travelled twice to film Geoff at his home on the New South Wales central coast, hearing him talk about the early days in the Western Desert.

"Geoff believed Papunya Tula art should hang on gallery walls, next to the masters. That was his motivation and his vision," says Jo.

One of the people interviewed in the film by director Catriona McKenzie is the curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the Art Gallery of NSW, Hetti Perkins.

"I think that Geoff was a visionary," Hetti Perkins says.

"The representatives of the Papunya community were also happy to lend their support to the film," says Nic. "He had fond regard for Geoff, and community president Michael Nelson Tjakamarra said 'the kids of Papunya should know who their grandfathers were and what great artists they were'." Interviews were conducted in Papunya with Michael Nelson Tjakamarra (a renowned artist as well as community president), Long Jack Phillipus Tjakamarra (one of the last surviving Papunya "painting men") and Linda and Amos Anderson (former students of Geoff Bardon).

The title "Mr Patterns" was chosen because it was the affectionate nickname given to Geoff by the kids at Papunya.

Says Jo Plomley of Geoff Bardon: "Not many people die knowing that they really made a change in the world."

Developed with the assistance of the Australian Film Commission and the NSW Film and Television Office, and developed and produced with the assistance of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, *Mr Patterns* will screen on ABC-TV. Penny Robins is executive producer.



## Troubled Minds

In a disused hospital pantry in the 1940s, an Australian doctor discovered an astonishing treatment for bi-polar disorder (or manic-depression, as it was then known). It would change the way we think about mental illness and mark the beginning of psychopharmacology—using drugs to manage psychiatric conditions.

*Troubled Minds—The Lithium Revolution*—a new dramatised documentary from director Dennis K Smith and producer John Lewis—tells this remarkable story.

A psychiatrist and ex-prisoner of war in Changi, Dr John Cade was convinced by his wartime experiences that nutrition and body chemistry were determining factors in mental health. In those days, there were no anti-depressants or anti-psychotics; Freudian psychoanalysis, electric shock and lobotomy were the dominant approaches and patients were often locked up in asylums. Yet Cade went looking for chemical alternatives. After a series of experiments, he honed in on a simple salt—lithium.

However, drug companies remained uninterested because lithium was a naturally occurring element that could not be exploited commercially. Determining the correct dosage for an individual was also extremely difficult. It would take 20 years of struggle before lithium treatment was finally accepted, but the scientists and psychiatrists who followed Cade's lead persevered. Their work has meant a chance at stability for hundreds of thousands of people around the world, and lithium remains the benchmark for bi-polar treatment today.

*Troubled Minds* was made by Film Australia under its National Interest Program, with Franco di Chiera and Penny Robins as executive producers. Developed with the assistance of Film Victoria and produced in association with Omar Khayam Films and SBS Independent, the one-hour program will screen on SBS-TV at 8.30pm on 14 October, during Mental Health Week.

## On air

SBS will screen *Silent Storm* on Thursday 9 September at 8.30pm as part of its *Storyline Australia* timeslot. The one-hour program, from writer/director/producer Peter Butt and producer Rob McAuley, raises important questions about whether nuclear fallout contaminated Australia's milk supply.

## National Treasures

You'll find them across Australia—hidden in museums, libraries and people's homes—the national treasures that bring our history to life.

*National Treasures* is a new Film Australia series hosted by the irrepressible Warren Brown—political cartoonist, columnist, history “tragic” and vintage car buff.

In 15 five-minute installments, Warren shines a welcome spotlight on sometimes forgotten gems in Australian public and private collections, from James Cook's *Endeavour* journal and the original *Waltzing Matilda* songsheet to Donald Bradman's bats and the world's only surviving “first-generation” computer.

Mark Hamlyn is executive producer and Paul Rudd is writer/series producer with Sally Regan as producer and Matthew Thomason as writer/director.

ABC-TV is broadcasting episodes from the series as part of its new history program, *Rewind*, screening at 9.30pm from 1 August.

All 15 episodes of *National Treasures* are available from Film Australia as a compilation video. See our website for details: [www.filmaust.com.au](http://www.filmaust.com.au)

## Vietnam Symphony

Film Australia has commissioned a new one-hour documentary—*Vietnam Symphony*.

To be directed by Tom Zubrycki and filmed on location in Vietnam, the film will tell how students and teachers from the Hanoi Conservatorium of Music literally went underground at the height of the Vietnam War.

Villagers helped them build an entire campus underground—including a 500-seat auditorium and individual caverns for 40 pianos. The students and teachers lived, studied and played music there for five years.

Since then, Vietnam has undergone profound changes. These talented musicians and composers are now among the country's cultural leaders, yet their children take little interest in the past, looking to the west to shape their future.

Against the backdrop of war, *Vietnam Symphony* paints a portrait of a rapidly changing nation, embracing trends and ideas from the very countries the Vietnamese fought against 40 years earlier.

*Vietnam Symphony* will be produced by Film Australia in association with Stonebridge Productions. Kerry Herman will produce, with Don Featherstone as line producer and Penny Robins as executive producer.

The project was developed with assistance from the NSW Film and TV Office and the Australian Film Commission and will be produced in association with the NSW Film and TV Office and SBS Independent.

SBS plans to broadcast the program in April 2005 to mark the 30th anniversary of the withdrawal of US troops from Saigon and the reunification of Vietnam.

## In production

### The Art of War

Production has begun on this four-part series, which will explore Australian art that has been inspired, or provoked, by our involvement in wars and armed conflicts during the past century. Made in association with Early Works and SBS Independent, it is written and presented by Betty Churcher, who is also co-producing with director John Hughes.

*Executive Producer: Anna Grieve*

### Australian Biography Online II

This web-based biographical resource, hosted by the National Library of Australia, draws from material collected for Film Australia's *Australian Biography* series. Initially, full transcripts, video files and study guide were made available for 28 interviews from the series. Now, producer Ron Saunders and website director Thomas Ashelford are working to add more interviews to this growing archive.

*Executive Producer: Mark Hamlyn*

### Divorce Stories

Individuals going through divorce, children of divorced parents and people looking back on their divorce have responded to a call by the makers of this documentary television series. But director/producer Jessica Douglas-Henry, producer Mary-Ellen Mullane and series director Steve Westh are still looking for a *couple* who are actually in the process of divorce and willing to be filmed during mediation. Filming has started on the series, which will screen on SBS.

*Executive Producer: Penny Robins*

### A Matter of Choice

Writer/director Sean Cousins and producers Stuart Menzies and Tony Wright continue to follow the progress of Australia's first “designer baby”. Made in association with December Films and SBS Independent, this one-hour program explores the complex issues surrounding genetic medicine. It was produced with the assistance of Film Victoria and developed with the assistance of Film Victoria and the Australian Film Commission.

*Executive Producer: Mark Hamlyn*

### The Safe House

Lee Whitmore is using an unusual technique in the production of her animation for SBS-TV, involving a mixture of paint and oil on glass plates which she then digitally photographs. Produced by Denise Haslem, the half-hour program is inspired by the infamous Petrov Affair of the 1950s.

*Executive Producer: Anna Grieve*

### Trafficked

Producer Stella Zammataro and writer/director/producer Luigi Acquisto have finished filming in Thailand and Cambodia for their one-hour documentary for SBS-TV about the child sex trade between Australia and Asia. The program follows former Australian Federal Police officer turned private detective, Chris Payne as he investigates stories of women and children caught up in prostitution “trade routes”.

*Executive Producers: Franco di Chiera and Anna Grieve*

## A farewell message from Sharon Connolly

*Continued from page 1*

Though an industry support mechanism, Film Australia does not exist solely for the production industry. Though Government owned, it does not exist to produce propaganda. Though it works closely with broadcasters, it is not simply a TV program supplier. Film Australia's mission is the creation of an audio-visual record of Australian life, for the wider community.

I feel privileged to have had an opportunity to contribute to Film Australia's work. I'm grateful too for the many kind messages I received as I made my exit, and would like to wish the very best to all those who will work with Film Australia in times to come.

I'm sure that you will support and safeguard Film Australia's capacity to commission and produce a record of our national life and concerns, and to make that record available to audiences throughout the community, now and in future.

## The Back of Beyond now on DVD

A classic film from 1954 and one of Film Australia's best sellers is now available on DVD. *The Back of Beyond* follows outback mailman Tom Kruse as he sets out along the Birdsville Track with supplies and mail for half a dozen cattle stations. This 50th anniversary collectors edition includes a photo gallery and a biography of writer/director John Heyer as well as an extract from one of Heyer's earlier films, *Journey of a Nation*—a 1947 documentary about the standardisation of rail gauges which this master filmmaker transformed into a heroic poem to the nation.

## Secrets of the Jury Room

Enter the normally closed world of the jury room to discover how juries really work.

In *Secrets of the Jury Room*, two juries decide the fate of the accused in a murder case. The case is fictional, but highly realistic. On trial is a young gay Lebanese man who is accused of killing his terminally ill lover. A retired judge presides over real barristers, expert witnesses and court personnel. As we watch the jurors grapple with the evidence and the moral issues, we see how personalities and prejudices can affect the process of the law.

Film Australia recently acquired this thought-provoking documentary for distribution. Directed by Aviva Ziegler and produced by Julian Russell with John Bryson (author of *Evil Angels*) as associate producer, the one-hour program screened at the recent Sydney Film Festival and was broadcast on SBS-TV on 15 July.

## International sales update

In Europe, *Handle With Care* was licensed to SBS Broadcasting BV for cable and satellite television in the Netherlands and to YLE Digital's TEEMA for free digital terrestrial television in Finland, and *The Mascot* was licensed to RTSI for free-to-air television in Switzerland. Hellas Television International was appointed as a non-exclusive agent within Greece and Cyprus.

In North America, *Diverted to Delhi* was licensed to Canal D for cable and satellite television in Canada and *Slow Food Revolution* was licensed to Slow Food USA for a festival screening in Napa, California.

In Asia and the Pacific, *Sister, If You Only Knew* and *Not to Lose You, My Language* were licensed to Maori Television for free-to-air television in New Zealand; *Ted's Evolution* was licensed to UCAPET Inc for free-to-air, cable and satellite television; and *Born for the Fight—The Art of Muay Thai* was re-licensed to Discovery Communications for pay television in central and southern Asia, India and the Pacific Rim.

## Report from government inquiry

In its recent report to Federal Parliament on future opportunities on future opportunities for the film, animation, special effects and electronic games industries, the House of Representative Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts recognised the "substantial cultural benefits of documentaries" for Australia.

The committee recommended that the Government release the report by the Australian Broadcasting Authority on Australian content on subscription television, and give prime consideration to the cultural impact of a minimum requirement for documentaries in any future decisions on pay TV.

It also recognised the ongoing value of reliable statistics for policy makers and the sector, and recommended that subscription documentary channels be required to report annually on their acquisition of Australian content.

Film Australia made a detailed submission to the inquiry, identifying the critical needs for the Australian documentary sector as "the 3 Rs":

- Regulation—of free-to-air and subscription television to create a robust market for local documentary production
- Research—of production, distribution and exhibition of documentary across delivery platforms
- Resources—to allow for rising production costs, plus additional resources to maximise the documentary sector's capacity to fulfil its role as creators and managers of the record of Australian life in the digital age.

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