

## PRODUCTION REPORT

### IN POST PRODUCTION

**City of Dreams** Explores the remarkable personal and professional marriage of architects Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony.  
*Writer/Director:* Belinda Mason  
*Writer/Producer:* Gaby Mason

**Cunnamulla** A portrait of a small, isolated community in far outback Queensland.  
*Writer/Director/Producer:* Dennis O'Rourke

**The Fifth Set** The history of Australia's relationship with the Davis Cup.  
*Writers:* Nick Place, Kate Latimer  
*Director:* Sue Thomson  
*Producers:* Kate Latimer, Cristina Pozzan

**Mabo—The Native Title Revolution** An extensive multimedia resource that explores a landmark in Australian history—the Mabo

case—as well as related issues.  
*Writers:* Trevor Graham, Jonathan Kenna, Garth Nettheim, Tim Rowse, Dr Nonie Sharp, Dr Lisa Strelein  
*Directors:* Rob Wellington, Trevor Graham  
*Producers:* Rob Wellington, Cristina Pozzan

**The Music School** A documentary look at Sydney University Music Department's struggle to survive.  
*Writers/Directors/Producers:* Bob Connolly, Robin Anderson

**Steel City** With one month before closure, the employees of Newcastle's BHP steelworks struggle to come to terms with an uncertain future.  
*Writer/Director:* Catherine Marciniak  
*Producers:* Denise Haslem, Gina Twyble

**Ten Million Wildcats** The story of how domestic cats have returned to the wild.  
*Writers/Producers:* Gary Steer, Tina Dalton-Hagege  
*Director:* Gary Steer

### IN PRODUCTION

**Australian Biography 8** The latest in the on-going series that charts the lives of some of the most extraordinary Australians of our time.  
*Director/Producer:* Robin Hughes

**Sea Our Way** Examines the economic and spiritual relationship of indigenous Australians to the sea  
*Writer/Director:* Aven Noah  
*Writer/Producer:* Rose Hesp

**Tour Wars** Looks behind the gloss of the tourist industry to reveal how Australia is sold overseas.  
*Writer/ Director:* Julia Redwood  
*Producer:* Ed Punchard

**National Museum of Australia Vision Theatre Project** A commissioned project on the theme of what the future holds.  
*Director:* Andrew Taylor  
*Producer:* Anna Grieve  
*Associate Producer:* Jeannine Baker

## Lies, Spies & Olympics: "A story Australia needed to hear" says Fahey



On 31 May 2000, hundreds of thousands of Australians tuned in to **Lies, Spies & Olympics** on ABC-TV. The documentary was produced as part of Film

Australia's National Interest Program, which is entrusted with creating an audio-visual record of life in Australia.

At the film's launch at the Museum of Sydney on 4 May, the Federal Minister for Finance and Administration, the Honourable John Fahey, remarked on the importance of recording the nation's history and of passing on our stories to new generations. In his speech, the Minister said:

'I am delighted to see Film Australia involved in this particular production and in many others. We must never lose sight of the national interest. What is the national interest? The description applies to so many areas. Perhaps the best example in recent times was our support for East Timor where, I think you'll acknowledge, Australia did so well.

'The national interest aspect of Film Australia's work puts chapters of our history on film — something which today's generation and future generations need. I hope that governments of the future will continue to support programs such as the one that Film Australia undertakes. From a Finance Minister's point of view, I've got to say that there are certain times where, as best you can, you have to step away from the bean-counting exercise and say, "this is in Australia's interest, in its national interest". So I commend Film Australia for the work that it does in taking Australia to the world and Australia's history to the world.'

The Minister said that **Lies, Spies and Olympics** was an example of the history that needed to be told.

'There are some here who are around my age who would have some very vague memories of the 1956 Olympics. I can say in my case, decked in some sort of warmish clothing, I was taken to the Hume Highway somewhere out of Sydney one night to watch the flame go by — the torch relay. It was a very fleeting moment in terms of the Olympics but as close as I could get to anything at that time. In 1956 there were 5000 televisions in Australia, so unless you were in Melbourne or patriotic enough and found the few shillings necessary to actually

participate in the Games, you simply heard about it, read about it, listened to the reports on radio. So the story of the Melbourne Olympics is one that perhaps few of us would have recollected unless we'd had the opportunity to see this film tonight.

'In his book *Australia and the Olympic Games*, the renowned Olympic historian Harry Gordon recalls that "When the games came to Melbourne, it was as if the city had been brushed by a certain magic". He said further, "Nothing before or since, no football final or test cricket match or Melbourne Cup, neither the departure of Burke and Wills, nor the arrival of the Beatles has ever evoked such sheer emotional involvement from the whole community".

'I shouldn't try and tell you the story in any more detail. What I do say again is that this is a story that Australia needed to hear. This is a story about a city that found its confidence, that said to the world — back at a time when we were considered to be extraordinarily remote in a global sense — that we can do something. We can put on the biggest sporting event, the biggest peace-time event, in the world's history. That was in 1956. It's ahead of us again shortly. It was an interesting chapter in the history of our country. I'm proud of it. You will be too.'

## Meet the 'Popstars' of the small business world

Most small businesses in Australia hit the wall in the first three years but there are some that tough out the turmoil. **Risky Business** is a real-life sitcom series that follows the fortunes of four sets of entrepreneurs, each on the verge of opening a new business.

In this fast and funny four-part series we meet a band of charismatic cellular cowboys—part of the new breed of hip twentysomething business types—as they take their mobile phone business to the fat end of town. There's a dynamic fashion design duo who are preparing for the cut-throat catwalks of Australian Fashion Week. A young Hong Kong couple and their Aussie icecream partners lose their cool in their fraught and frantic race to open an upmarket icecream cafe on time. And the heat is turned up on a small family business when the father decides to open another chicken take-away. Each is risking fortune and family relationships to get the venture off the ground.

The four businesses that appear in **Risky Business** were whittled down from 15 potential storylines. Before making the selection, writer/director/producer Susan Lambert carried out extensive research in Sydney and regional NSW.

"It's about finding people who want to tell their stories", explains Lambert, "People who, consciously or unconsciously, use the telling of stories to explore and confront things about themselves. Television is a voyeuristic medium and viewers love the larger-than-life characters who appear in **Risky Business**."

It was also a matter of finding crews capable of doing the kind of up-close-and-personal work the program required. "To do this kind of filming, you need to be mature, able to listen and to understand that even when it appears that we are all just standing around, we are constantly on the job. It is necessary to be constantly alert to subtle changes of mood or to unexpected dialogue which could be pivotal to the story."

The producers knew exactly what they needed for the series, "and we kept filming until we got it," explains producer Denise Haslem. "While Susan was in the field film-

ing, I was monitoring the rushes, identifying missing elements, thin plot points or spots that needed more impact so we could shoot the appropriate footage." The result was 150 hours of footage, shot over five months. The characters are caught at their creative and hard-working best and at their tantrum-throwing worst.

In the series, their stories are teased out over four tightly structured episodes. Applying the principles of drama to real-life situations, the filmmakers have achieved a result that many would find surprising—a truly engaging program about business that has viewers laughing often and wondering anxiously what will happen next.

The tension on the screen is palpable, as deadlines loom, purse strings tighten and partnerships begin to crack under pressure. "For these people", says Lambert, "business is their life. They are stimulated by challenges, risks, being out on the financial edge."

When one character stops to wonder "How can we do all this work and still have a life?", his partner's answer is blunt, even dismissive: "It's called pushing yourself".

*Risky Business is a Film Australia National Interest Program produced in association with SBS Independent and developed with the assistance of the New South Wales Film and Television Office.*

The series screens on SBS-TV at 8pm on Wednesdays 28 June and 5, 12, 19 July.



## In brief

Sadness won Best Documentary at the ATOM Awards in May. It shared the prize with Orientations: Chris Doyle: Stirred not Shaken.

Uncle Chatzkel was highly commended for the Ethnic Affairs Commission Award, part of the recent Dendy Awards.

A Calcutta Christmas was awarded a Certificate of Merit at the San Francisco International Film Festival.

Four Film Australia documentaries will be included in the upcoming Melbourne Film Festival (19 July to 6 August): Tosca, The Fifth Set, City of Dreams and The Diplomat.

The Diplomat will also screen at the Brisbane Film Festival and will have a special screening at the United Nations in New York in October.

Thomson of Arnhem Land has been invited to screen at the New Zealand Film Festival.

Tosca screened at Banff in May.

## Thomson of Arnhem Land

In 1933, a state of panic erupted in Darwin after five Japanese fishermen and three white men were killed by Aboriginal clansmen on the east coast of Arnhem Land. Donald Thomson, a young anthropologist, volunteered to go to Arnhem Land to try to prevent the race war that people feared.

For two years, he lived with the Aboriginal people, learning their languages and their way of life. He struck a deal with the Yolngu leader, Wonggu, that the government would respect their cultural traditions if the Yolngu would keep the peace.

Thomson's report to the government in 1937 argued for the recognition and protection of Aboriginal culture and outlined a vision of land rights. But his strongly-voiced opinions won him few supporters.

A new Film Australia production, **Thomson of Arnhem Land**, tells the story of the man and his passions. The 55-minute documentary, written by Michael Cummins, directed by John Moore and produced by Moore and Michael McMahon, was launched in Melbourne on 8 June by Professor Marcia Langton and screened on ABC-TV on 29 June.

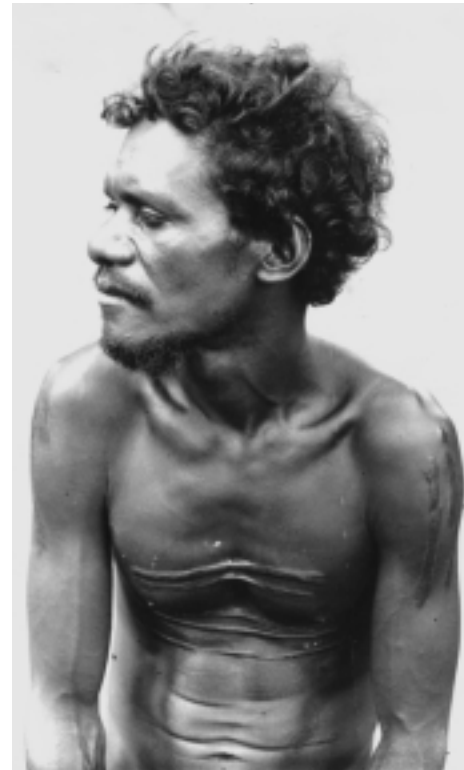
The film follows Thomson's journeys through Arnhem Land and explores his relationships—with Wonggu, and with Raiwalla, his guide and friend. It reveals his professional battles and traces his fight to preserve traditional indigenous culture under threat from assimilation policies that demanded Aboriginal people 'must become like us'.

Although his views may have been ignored by the policy makers, Thomson's legacy remains. The artefacts he collected, along with over 10,000 of his exquisite photographs and detailed field notes, are a cultural record beyond value. They are in the care of Museum Victoria in Melbourne.

A *Film Australia National Interest Program* in association with *John Moore Productions Pty Ltd*. Produced with the assistance of *Cinemia's Film Victoria* and the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*. Developed with the assistance of *Film Victoria* and *Museum Victoria*.

**ABOVE:** Raiwalla in a photo from the Thomson collection.

**BELOW:** At the launch, Raiwalla's son Jimmy Burinyila (who appears in the film), John Moore, Donald's Thomson's widow Dorita Thomson, executive producer Franco di Chiera and Michael McMahon.



## Five AFI nominations

Film Australia National Interest Program productions have received five Australian Film Institute award nominations.

**THE DIPLOMAT** for best documentary and best direction in a documentary. **UNCLE CHATZKEL** for best documentary and for original score (written by Guy Gross).

**THOMSON OF ARNHEN LAND** for best editing in a documentary (edited by Andrea Lang).

The award screenings begin their national tour in June and the awards will be announced on 18 November.

East Timor's freedom fighter and Nobel Peace Prize winner José Ramos Horta in the final dramatic stages of his 24-year campaign to secure independence for his country. Ramos Horta received a standing ovation when he and the filmmakers took to the stage for a Q&A session after each of the two screenings.

Popular diva Joan Carden and her fellow artist Greg Tomlinson joined the Q&A after the premiere screening of **Tosca**—the number two documentary in the audience poll. The film from director Trevor Graham and producer Patricia Lovell goes behind the scenes of Opera Australia's production of Puccini's masterpiece, from day one of rehearsals to opening night at the Sydney Opera House.

The third most popular doco, **Buried Country**, introduced the audience to the largely untold story of Aboriginal country music and how indigenous Australians have used this musical style to give voice to their experiences. Directed by Andy Nehl, produced by Liz Watts and written by Clinton Walker, the film features candid interviews with performers such as Wilga Williams, Auriel Andrew, Vic Simms, Jimmy Little, Roger Knox, Bobby McLeod and Bob Randall. The festival screening brought these artists together on stage for the first time.

## Top 3 docs of the Sydney Film Festival

The audience at this year's Sydney Film Festival has voted three Film Australia productions as the favourite documentaries at the State Theatre from a strong local and international selection.

The most popular documentary was **The Diplomat** by director/writer Tom Zubrycki, producer Sally Browning and co-producer/writer Wilson da Silva. The film follows

**Buried Country** screened on SBS-TV on Saturday 8 July

**The Diplomat** will screen later this year. ABC-TV will screen **Tosca** on 23 August.



**AT THE LAUNCHES:** The Sydney Film Festival marked the premiere screenings of **Buried Country**, **The Diplomat** and **Tosca**. (Top) José Ramos Horta, Lynne Cosgrove, Major General Peter Cosgrove and Film Australia CEO Sharon Connolly at **The Diplomat** launch party. (Middle) At the **Tosca** party, the film's line producer Rose Hesp, editor Denise Haslem, DOP John Whitteron, director Trevor Graham and sound recordist Bronwyn Murphy. (Bottom) Musicians Bobby McLeod, Roger Knox and Jimmy Little on stage at Sydney's State Theatre after the **Buried Country** screening.

Real2Reel is published quarterly by Film Australia.

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