

The winner of the 1911 international competition for the design of a new capital city for the new Commonwealth of Australia having been announced in 1912, and subsequent revelations of the interference of the department in the original design later that year having been made known to the winner, Walter Burley Griffin of Chicago wrote to King O'Malley in January 1913:

I had entered this Australian event to be my first and last competition, solely because I have for many years greatly admired the bold radical steps in politics and economies which your country has dared to take, and which must, for a long time, set ideals for Europe and America ahead of the possibility of their accomplishment.

Griffin's perception of the new city was that it would be a symbol of this bold new Commonwealth, as both a national and international entity.

While much of the 2013 year-long celebration of the city's naming on 12 March 1913 has been in Canberra itself, and by, with, and for Canberrans, there was always a view to the celebration of the national and international dimensions of Canberra. Indeed, the celebration has been ultra-local, regional, national, international, and very soon will also be extra-terrestrial, as a flag bearing the Centenary of Canberra logo will be taken by a Japanese astronaut into outer space.

In fact, I will begin with the logo, as there is a national aspect to its origin. Four years ago, we invited recent graduates and young professionals, at least one from every state and territory, to participate in a workshop to develop a new logo. These young professionals experienced an excellent induction into both the physical and symbolic realities of their national capital. Mentored in the task by His Excellency, Mr Michael Bryce, architect and designer of several very successful Australian logos, they came up with terrific ideas which resulted in a brand marker which has worked very well for us ever since. Its incorporation of Griffin's circles and triangles, and a 1913 font, yielded a sunny energy that still, for me, reflects that group of bright young designers. A number of these young Australians came to the capital for the first time, with the predictable prejudices of those who have only heard about it second or third hand, and often from those who have never been to the capital, or perhaps visited 30 years ago

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or more, when it was still in its infancy. Some had received worn-out messages that there was nothing to do, no young people—a barren place, which I imagine was not even true in the pioneering frontier-town days.

Having freshly experienced the capital as it was in 2009 (it has already changed in the last four years), their opinions altered dramatically. One of the participants said ‘If Canberra *is* blank, then it’s a blank canvas on which we can draw ourselves in any way we want’.

He and his young colleagues learnt quickly that even though Canberra may indeed appear empty on the occasional, cold, high country night, this is a superficial impression; they became convinced of the richness beneath, in the history of the capital, in its collections and achievements, and to what extent all that can be drawn on for inspiration and fresh innovative content.

This also emerged as an emphasis of the Australian Theatre Forum which was hosted by the Centenary this year and which drew eager participants from all over the country. The collections here were acknowledged as rich resources for further creativity, not just in theatre, but for film, dance, literature and the visual arts.

Taking the time to invest in more than a superficial scan inevitably leads visitors to the conclusion that this capital, like other national capitals, represents an invaluable asset, not only in the cultural treasures it holds on behalf of the Australian people, but in encouraging participatory democracy via an understanding of the high ideals, vast aspirations, and history of achievement in arts and science (those two mainstays of article 27 of the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights) upon all of which the capital has been built. And that asset is precious. Let me reference just one of the reasons why.

During the lead up to this year’s Centenary, the *Australian Financial Review* published the results of a survey of young Australians who were asked about systems of government. Oddly, and worryingly, in an age when a kind of cultural democracy is all-pervasive (you can vote on anything as your favourite film, piece of music, performer etc and you can blog your views to the world—to hell with expert opinion), a number of these young Australians said they did not particularly value democracy—and that another system might serve Australia just as well. This is quite different for young new Australians, many of whom seek residence or asylum here precisely *because* of our democratic system and the belief that they might get a fair go. But if there is complacency in young, second, or longer generation Australians, then I believe that strong signs and symbols of democracy are important, and believe that the national capital is well placed to provide them.

Much of this was discussed in our National Press Club conversation, 'The Future Journey of Democracy', a collaboration between the Centenary and the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum, and moderated by the ABC's Geraldine Doogue. There was a simultaneous conversation, both gatherings linked by satellite, at Federation Square in Melbourne, for the festival I direct there, The Light in Winter. The voices heard were Australian voices of diverse cultural background: Indigenous Australian, Muslim, Somalian, Iranian, Indian, Burmese, Greek, and many more. A valuable understanding quickly occurred, that the tools of democracy are *already* different throughout the world, and that the concept of democracy needs to be flexible enough to morph, in order to meet the needs of new and evolving democracies in places like North Africa, Burma, and Somalia, and even countries like India whose enormous population still struggles to achieve more effective participatory democracy. The key was thought to be 'inclusion', and one of our many challenges in nurturing and maintaining effective democracy is to ensure that these kinds of conversations, especially those which *include* the culturally diverse voices of Australia, replace the complacency which clearly dominates the social and political engagement (or lack thereof) amongst any number of Australians, certainly *not* just *young* Australians, whose democratic responsibilities are often neglected.

This focus on national symbolism has long been part and parcel of what the PACER (Parliament and Civics Education Rebate) program does annually for around 160,000 Year 6 schoolchildren from all round the county. For these young people, as for many recent new Australian residents, the capital makes for an inspirational visit. The curiosity they display at the Museum of Australian Democracy, and the obvious awe and respect they feel at the Australian War Memorial, are two of the more obvious signs that the capital's symbolic role is functional and powerful.

One of the ongoing projects which has reached far further than the borders of the ACT is the Canberra Diaspora. This project acknowledged the transitory nature of a national capital in which, for more than one hundred years, there has been a continuous process of movement in and out: from Indigenous habitation and ceremonial meeting and pilgrimage to the higher country, to pastoralists who then had to be moved on, then surveyors, engineers, builders and all the service-providers that entails, to Defence personnel, medical professionals, scientists, educators, students, politicians, public servants, diplomats, artists and sportspersons and at any time the 25 per cent of the population which comes from a non-English-speaking background. We appealed particularly to those who had been here, had served and made their contribution and gone again. The dedicated website has stories from all over Australia and the world, and I quote just one in support of arguing the importance of the symbolic role of the capital.

Jacqui Martin now lives in Melbourne and at the time she uploaded her video she was head of marketing at La Trobe University. If you go to the website you will see she describes very funny stories about her first two trips to Canberra—both times vowing she would never return again. On the third visit she was strong-armed to the War Memorial for the first time, and she describes turning around in the tomb of the unknown soldier—looking down Anzac Parade across Lake Burley Griffin, to old Parliament house, to new Parliament House and says: ‘I actually burst into tears, and it was the first time in my forty something years of being in Australia that I really knew what it meant to be Australian’.¹

There is a massive unrealised potential for the capital to be seen and used even more in this way. I suggest that, paradoxically, one of the biggest thorns in the side of such ambition is the tendency for some of those involved in political life, both politicians and press, to diss Canberra for very dubious and ill-considered reasons. I will say a bit more about that later, but would add now that I also believe the whingeocracy is probably, in any case, in its decline, since for younger generations and more recent Australian citizens, this *is* where the capital is, and *does*, happily for them and for many of us, have the kind of symbolic status demanded of a capital.

With regard to young visitors, I should add that Canberra has welcomed many more young people from all over Australia this year. To mention just a few, the Tournament of Minds national finals saw hundreds of bright youngsters engaged in finding performative solutions to complex challenges, and the Youth Parliament again considered the big issues for Australia. In the sporting domain, major gatherings such as the Kangaroo Cup and Special Olympics swimming added participatory sports to the capital’s special Centenary elite sporting program (for which the Australian Institute of Sport is the national centre). At the other end of the age scale, in the participatory stakes, the many Masters events held in Canberra this year demonstrated an enthusiasm for holding signature national competitions in the capital. Record numbers were recorded for many, including the Masters rowing event on Lake Burley Griffin, wildly under-rated it seems for such purposes. Not so, with Mt Stromlo, now rated as the home of mountain-biking in Australia; and how good it was to hear Canberran Caroline Buchanan named as Australian Cyclist of the Year 2013.

In that elite sporting realm, Canberra proved itself to be a successful host to major international events. Golf Australia is now quoted as saying that the Handa Women’s Australian Open, here for the first time at Royal Canberra Golf Club, was the best ever. The first ever international cricket match held in Canberra’s history (hard to believe, but true), between Australia and the West Indies, under brand spanking new lights at Manuka, was a sell-out success. Similar crowds and expertise in production

¹ Jacqui Martin’s story for Canberra Diaspora, <http://vimeo.com/41272439>.

and delivery were reported for the Australia and New Zealand rugby league test, the Brumbies v. British and Irish Lions and the netball test. Add in all those Masters events, plus the national Indigenous golf competition, and together they demonstrate the capacity for the capital to host a wide range of major events, not for the pleasure of Canberrans alone, but as a sign of the increasing sophistication of this still young city, and of the well-rounded culture of this place. In the past, Canberra has been falsely represented as nothing *but* politicians and public servants, but one of the many legacies of 2013 will be some powerful busting of that outdated myth.

That Canberra has the liveliest and most participatory sporting community per capita in Australia is important for Australians to understand about their capital. That it has a lively and active Indigenous community which continues to preserve and expand traditional culture and practices is also important for Australians to understand. How many were aware prior to this centenary year and the profile it has created, that within 40 minutes drive from their capital, and within the ACT borders, we can view ancient rock art and hear the stories of those who once traveled long distances to observe law in the high country, to understand craft and food gathering practice, and how the land was cared for.

The enthusiasm and support across the board, of both Canberrans and the record number of visitors to the capital this year, surely justifies ambitions not only for first-class sports facilities in the capital, but also new performing arts facilities (this is the role that the Kennedy Centre plays in Washington), and that place called the Australian Forum, where the biggest and boldest ideas are debated. I would argue, as a South Australian, that these are not local facilities for the benefit of Canberrans alone, but constitute infrastructure, I hope undeniably excellent in architectural ambition, which strengthens the capital and makes us ever prouder of the way in which it symbolises our noblest aspirations—in arts, sports, ideas, science, research and innovation of all kinds.

In that case, these projects demand federal government participation, and at the same time they enable the continuing development of a city which Walter and Marion Mahony Griffin imagined one hundred years ago, and as Prime Minister Andrew Fisher expressed at the time:

Here, on this spot, in the near future, and, I hope, the distant future too, the best thoughts of Australia will be given expression to, both in legislative

and administrative acts. I hope this City will be the seat of learning as well as of politics, and it will also be the home of art.²

The federal government's generous contribution to the new National Arboretum Canberra already ensures an enduring legacy of the centenary year, one which is beyond the ambitions of political terms and indeed beyond the ambitions of any single lifetime: it will be at its best 100 years from now. I hope that one of the over-arching legacies will be the stimulus of a continuing collaboration between the federal and territory governments to allow this young city to continue to mature, for the benefit of all Australians.

While the capital has been enriched throughout 2013 by a program which has celebrated the history and the achievements of this still young city, its present capabilities, capacities and rich cultural landscape, its symbolic role as the seat of federal government, and thus its connection to the nation and the world, have also been firmly in mind, and ever present throughout the year.

A priority in programming was Indigenous content. I detailed this content in my Schuman Lecture in July this year and it can be found online at canberra100.com.au and also at the ANU's Centre for European Studies. The program demonstrated not only the richness of local Aboriginal culture, and allowed many local traditional stories to be told and talent to be profiled, but saw Indigenous Australians from all over the country welcomed here and meeting local communities—they came from Roeburne in the Pilbara, from Elcho Island and the Torres Strait Islands, East Arnhem Land, Central Australia, Brisbane, Melbourne, New South Wales and South Australia.

This was a vast and rare program, made possible by the federal government's contribution to the Centenary program, and included *Seven Sisters Songlines*, a collaboration with the ANU's Diana James as part of a huge survey of performative and visual representation of this story which is told, sung, danced and painted by Indigenous Australians across a vast sweep from west to east coasts. These collected representations are building to an even more comprehensive survey in future years, and we were honoured to support one of the first major manifestations, directed by Wesley Enoch, Stradbroke Island man, and first Indigenous artistic director of a state theatre company (Queensland). The performances were held at the National Museum of Australia which holds within its architecture the symbolic red line which points us directly to Central Australia whence this particular version of the story and its owners and performers came.

² Andrew Fisher, Speech at the ceremony to lay the foundation stones for Canberra, 12 March 1913 in *Canberra: Capital City of the Commonwealth of Australia*, Government Printer, Victoria, [1913], p. 23.

Acknowledgement of original habitation and custodianship for tens of thousands of years constituted an appropriate prelude to a celebration of the energy and activity of the last one hundred.

In a nod to the original quest for a site for the new capital, we ensured the inclusion of the borders in an early salute to the surveyors, and to the ACT's 'unmade edges' in community artist projects at Tharwa, Uriarra, Hall, Pialligo, Oakes Estate and Stromlo. The surrounding region has also seen activity, acknowledged by the Centenary, in Goulburn (for the 150th anniversary of their status as Australia's first inland city), Queanbeyan in its 175th year, Leeton (also designed by Walter Burley Griffin and celebrating 100 years in 2013), Yass, the Snowy Mountains, Bega and Jervis Bay, while the Wreck Bay community presented a superb exhibition *Windsongs and Waterlines* at Canberra Museum and Gallery and Lanyon.

Beyond the borders and nearby sites (many of which were candidates around 1910 for the new capital), the connections to regional Australia have been significant. Because of the role I undertook here, as Creative Director of the Centenary of Canberra, I have had to learn and understand much more about Canberra and its history, present and future. I first visited Canberra, often, but fleetingly, for family reasons; but since my second Canberra phase, a much deeper encounter with the place twenty years ago, I understood that whatever opinion might be expressed outside, possibly in ignorance of the real Canberra, the minute they are invited to the capital there is a sense of pilgrimage, and, whether in celebration or in protest, by invitation or intent, a sense of occasion. Since the time when Canberra gave me the priceless opportunity to add another string to my professional bow, that of artistic and creative direction, I have understood that to be invited to the capital just to join a meeting, or to come here to lobby and persuade is a matter of pride to any Australian. There is an instant sense that one's ideas, one's work, one's life *matters* on a national scale.

Any artist I invited to participate in the National Festival of Australian Theatre was intensely proud to show their work here: and so it was this year for all those companies which comprised Collected Works: Australia, the Canberra Theatre Centre's 2013 subscription program, which included works from every state and territory in the country.

This season included multi-Helpmann Award winning *The Secret River* which was co-commissioned by the Centenary of Canberra, along with the Sydney Theatre Company and the Sydney and Perth festivals. It also included Circa's *Wunderkammer* from Queensland, *Shrine* from Black Swan in Perth and Big hART's *Hipbone Sticking Out* from Roeburne, *As We Forgive* from Tasmania, *Thursday* from Brink in South Australia, Bell Shakespeare's *Henry 4*, which premiered in Canberra, and for

which John Bell was a Helpmann Award nominee, Ilbijerri Theatre Company's *Jack Charles v. The Crown* from Victoria, *Home at the End* from the ACT and *Wulamanayuwi and the Seven Pamanui*, the first ever theatre show from the Tiwi islands.

State and territory governments contributed generously to ensure this remarkable season. It spoke volumes for the challenges we continue to face in touring the very best of our theatrical and choreographic endeavours for the pleasure and enlightenment of all Australians. We produce so much good work, and tell so many superb stories in such skilled and awe-inspiring ways, yet fail to ensure that the best of this creative endeavour is shared with all Australians: their efforts are largely confined to local seasons only. One of the many enthusiastic reviews of *The Secret River* declared it 'unmissable': yet even with sold-out seasons in only three cities, most Australians will never see it. The season for Canberra's Centenary displayed the quality of the national wealth of performing arts which could be shared annually with so many more, if we could establish an effective and suitably funded touring mechanism—at very least to all capitals, if not regional centres as well.

The flipside of that national coin is, of course, the nurturing, encouragement and profiling of the creativity arising from the regions themselves. One of the most profound connections we made between the regions and the capital was via a project called One River, also made possible by the federal government's assistance. You can still explore this project by searching One River online: the website will be archived by the National Library of Australia for at least the next five years.

The project evolved from the moment I learned that Canberra is the biggest city in the Murray–Darling basin, and that the Murrumbidgee River runs through the ACT to join the waters which eventually flow to the mouth at Goolwa. The reality of this mighty river system provided a way for Canberra to unite four states and a territory during the centenary year.

My motivation for the project came from a personal place of long-held affinity with the river. My mother was born on the banks of the Murray at Cadell, where her father operated the Cadell–Morgan punt. I have been aware of the river and its people all my life. On my father's side, my late aunt had once been the Mayor of Goolwa and I had been aware of the silting issues at the mouth for many years. I had a mentoring role for some years at the Mildura–Wentworth Arts Festival, and was aware of the pain which diminishing and inconsistent water allocation issues caused. I had a heartfelt pull to river issues, and for the first time, unexpectedly, the Centenary of Canberra gave me the opportunity to create a conversation wider and deeper than the divisive question of water allocation.

This meta-project linked many individual projects the length and breadth of the Murray–Darling through Queensland, New South Wales, the ACT, Victoria and South Australia. In this respect it means the debunking of another myth about the national capital—that it is remote. What other city can claim such physical links to four states and a territory?

The project also demonstrates the liveliness of remote communities throughout the system, and these are evident on the website. The main focus of the project eventuated in 10 artist projects—in Augathella, Mitchell, Bourke, Canberra, Narrandera, Sandigo and Boree Creek, Lakes Mungo, Hattah and Hawthorn, Mildura–Wentworth, Albury–Wodonga, Murray Bridge and Goolwa–Murray Mouth. These projects have demonstrated the power of the arts to connect communities and to allow stories to be told and shared in lively, creative and engaging ways. Thousands of river people have been involved.

An installation, *Treasures of the River*, in Augathella, saw a call-out from schoolteacher and emerging artist Joanna Sutton for historical photographs from residents in the district. Working with students, Joanna in turn turned a selection of these photographs into postcards and mounted them as a large-scale installation. The project brought this small community together, to relish the artwork, to appreciate the presence of the artist in their town, and to add value to an appreciation of where they live. The local tourist information office is going to sell the packaged cards and there has been a subsequent geocaching project to uncover the secrets of the Warrego. The artist told me, with genuine passion, that the project had brought her and her husband into contact for the first time with a comprehensive range of the community who had been keen to show their photos and have the conversation.

The conversation was also extended to experts in a series of symposia which included water experts, and beautiful films made by Malcolm Mckinnon—all of which can be found on the website.

Artist Jude Roberts worked with residents in Mitchell, to place large stretches of paper at the waterline of the Maranoa River. The water itself made the marks, all different at different sites, and these huge scrolls eventually became the materials for beautiful installations, both abstract yet at the same time singing a highly local, authentic and organic song. These were seen in Mitchell, the Maranoa Gallery and Canberra.

These projects all, but *all*, demanded conversations with many locals; they all proved to be galvanising for their communities. More importantly, all those artists (plus family or friends) gathered in Canberra at Belconnen Arts Centre where they were

able to talk with each other and see evidence of each other's project. This links to the previous point about distance and the arts. It may not be well understood that this kind of gathering is a rarity in Australia: time and distance inevitably prevents the majority of our artists from ever seeing the work of other artists and, more importantly, meeting and talking with them. Linked-up projects like this, as well as genre-specific festivals provide a vital platform for the understanding and advancement of our artists and their work. Taking advantage of the digital age can also assist in this. An effective and wide-reaching national broadband network could offer multiple enhanced opportunities for connecting to projects, process, outcomes and dialogue in real time.

In this project, a shared notion of river life was palpable and respectful, and CEO of the Murray–Darling Basin Authority, Dr Rhondda Dickson, said that they would no doubt draw on these projects and the notion of shared values and memories in their ongoing work. This project makes a positive contribution to many and varied communities who have been perceived and portrayed for so many years as embattled, yet have so much in common.

One of the key figures in the creative team was Malcolm Mckinnon who reported:

Above all, the experience of working on ONE RIVER prompted me to think, as I frequently do, about the disconnect between, on the one hand, the deeply rooted and often heartfelt 'common wisdom' of people whose lives are truly connected with the rivers in some way or another and, on the other, the abstracted and politicized realm of public policy and planning. This, for me and for so many of the people I encountered in my travels across the basin, constitutes one of the great conundrums and great frustrations and it raises of course the inevitable question of where do we look for leadership and inspiration. At a political level, my experience working on the project made painfully evident, once again, the negative impacts of parochial state governments in the management of an ecosystem spanning multiple jurisdictions.

Aside from that, I was moved by the enormous generosity of people willing to share their stories with a complete stranger, and the openness of people to talk about places they cared deeply about and to embrace the opportunity for storytelling that the project presented.

We must bear in mind, that these were *artist* projects that happened through the Centenary of Canberra program, which had a care for, and an eye to, the country as a whole. There are lessons to be learnt about the power of the arts to tell the most important stories, and tell them in a way which strikes a chord, not just with art lovers,

but with *anyone* who can be drawn into the content of those projects. In the case of One River, a long string of river communities were drawn, through the arts, into reflections on their place, their history, present and future. Nothing could be more important for participation in the democratic process than to understand country, and to connect as community.

There was a subsequent event of importance under the One River banner. A ceremony at dusk, on the banks of the Murrumbidgee, within ACT borders, saw the sharing of song and dance between traditional custodians of that land, Paul House and the Ngambri dancers and Ngarrindjeri elder Major Sumner and the Tal-kin-geri Dancers, from the mouth of the Murray around Goolwa. The tangible connection between the two places was made movingly manifest when the southerners offered a whale dance, and we realised that whales will eventually swim in the water we saw running fast and clear in the Murrumbidgee that evening. In an interview, Major Sumner, who has also danced the Darling in the past, described a tradition that goes back millennia, which had vanished after European occupation, but has not been lost forever:

It's a long ways, but our people were involved in ceremonies, including the Murrumbidgee, all the rivers that connect up to the Murray and the Darling and all the water from here eventually gets down to our country ... So ceremonies were right along the rivers and all we are doing is putting the energy back in and getting the ceremonies going again.³

The One River project was launched in November 2012 as part of Goolwa's City of Culture program, and at that time, Ngunnawal ranger and cultural adviser Adrian Brown had been south to meet Major Sumner (known as Uncle Moogy) for the first time, and began then to learn something about that country. The River Ceremony emerged from that meeting, and via One River. The lessons for future pathways to genuine processes of reconciliation are many—they require respect for the protocols demanded and the individuals involved, they simply need the long time it really takes, and the best results often occur through arts and culture, which are an integral part of Indigenous Australian life, not a luxury leisure, as they can still be regarded by some Australians. As Central Australian Senior Law Woman Inawinytji Williamson said of the *Seven Sisters Songlines* project:

This is how we look after strongly this big important creation story and teach the young ones who come after us so that they can look after it in their turn and teach their children, the many to follow.⁴

³ *One Very Big Year Snapshot*, [Centenary of Canberra Task Force, Canberra, 2013], <http://www.canberra100.com.au/about/snapshot/>, p. 54.

⁴ *ibid*, p. 15. Translated by Dr Diana James.

This was a theme that emerged throughout the Indigenous program—most recently through a small project to allow ACT local Duncan Smith and his Wiradjuri Dancers to develop the *Biarni* creation story beyond just song and dance, to a theatrical form for children. It had its first showing at the Centenary's Children's Festival in Glebe Park and its potential is solid.

As examples of further exchange on the national and international basis, elders from Roeburne had come to Canberra for a development phase of the Big hART work *Hipbone Sticking Out*. In the rehearsal rooms of the Canberra Theatre Centre, I saw that group of elders and youngsters share song and dance with Duncan and his family. The indefatigable choreographer Elizabeth Cameron Dalman, whose company Mirramu and its studio sit at the edge of Lake George, created *Morning Star* with longtime collaborator, Torres Strait Islander dancer Albert David, and invited East Arnhem Land dancers, including the great dancer and songman Djakapurra Munyarryun, to join them. They premiered the work at the National Gallery of Australia, and presented excerpts as part of Canberra's big birthday bash around the lake on 12 March. More recently, excerpts have been seen in Taiwan where Elizabeth has long-established connections.

There has been more to all this than is understood when one simply claims a huge and comprehensive Indigenous Cultural Program. I might just add that Canberra resident, and a member of the Centenary of Canberra's informal Indigenous Cultural Reference Group, Jennifer Kemarre Martiniello, had a remarkable year: with a brilliant exhibition at the Canberra Glassworks and work also featured at the ANU and at the Canberra Museum and Art Gallery; the awarding of a prestigious two-year Australia Council Fellowship at the Red Ochre Awards presented at the Sydney Opera House; and ultimately winning the overall 2013 Telstra Indigenous Art Award presented in Darwin. What a remarkable list of achievements in just one year. Also in this year, Indigenous media have really shone: the support our program had from the *National Indigenous Times* and NIDTV exceeded expectations.

In other programs of national significance, the Museum of the Long Weekend saw vintage caravans driven from 40 different spots around the country to meet on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin in Canberra. They came from as far afield as Roeburne in the Pilbara, from Cairns, and from the south of Tasmania. This was a joyous gathering of beautiful vintage vehicles, many of which had been curated by artists to tell tales of the caravaners and their long weekends and longer journeys. The décor of 40s, 50s and 60s was exquisite. Again, these people talked to each other, visited each other's caravans and shared stories. This is very much the ethos of caravanning life.

It was pure pleasure for those of us who have such a romantic notion of a caravan life we have never experienced ourselves—we have perhaps just observed our parents or aunts and uncles and grandparents live that particular dream. But Scott Rankin, Artistic Director of Big hART, the remarkable company which produced this project, has a deeper philosophical underpinning of the project. He believes that, in this era of the apparent necessity of ever-increasing productivity, many governments and businesses neglect the positive values of leisure; that nation-building happens just as effectively at *rest*, as at hard-bitten hard-nosed ‘work’. There are, of course, multiple examples of the truth of this: Walt Whitman quietly wandered the woods, and came back to write the wise words that would influence millions thereafter, including Walter Burley and Marion Mahony Griffin, and their plans for this capital city. Canberra still sits within a green landscape very much because of the kind of philosophies which Whitman and others espoused.

British composer Edward Elgar wandered endlessly in his nearby forests, then sat down and wrote almost perfectly, with few alterations, the entire melodic lines, and orchestrations, which he had imagined in the wilds, of musical works which became emblematic for Britain. These are nation-building moments which began with the creativity of artists not at their desks or in their studios, but wandering in nature.

I think we all know of ourselves, and certainly it is true for me, that the best ideas come flooding in at unexpected moments of relative emptiness in the mind. When the mind is cluttered and over-busy, genuine creativity rarely emerges. Scott has a great point. And for all the focus on family, in an age when the concept of consistent stable nuclear families is so challenged by the reality of family breakdown and breakup, why would we *not* look more carefully at the exquisite bonding, as well as the learning, which always occurs on a good holiday. This ability to relax, to talk together round the fire at night, is surely an important factor in the development of healthy and engaged societies—something we would wish for all our citizens, yet so obviously absent for so many driven in a work-work-work society. This simple device, a project around caravans, stimulates profound considerations for national life.

National institutions played an important role in celebrating Canberra’s Centenary, not only the National Gallery of Australia and the Australian War Memorial, but the Mint, the Australian National Botanical Gardens, the Royal Military College Duntroon, the National Portrait Gallery which made huge efforts to connect its themes to the chronologically themed sequence of the centenary year, and perhaps most significantly the National Museum of Australia, with its *Glorious Days: Australia 1913*, the National Australian Archives with its *Design 29* and the National Library of Australia with *Dream of a Century: The Griffins in Australia*.

The Museum of Australian Democracy continues to present its year-long *Art of Influence*, and amongst many other exhibitions allowed us to see Arthur Boyd through a new political perspective. And *this* Parliament House celebrated its 25th year, especially through the beautiful publication *Interwoven*, by Pamille Berg who had originally commissioned the art and craft for this house, and through *Monument*, a ballet commissioned by the Centenary of Canberra from the Australian Ballet to celebrate this anniversary. The work was choreographed by Garry Stewart, and designed by Mary Moore (both from Adelaide) with music by ex-Canberran Huey Benjamin. It was extremely well received by the public, and in reviews, and we are confident after its world premiere in Canberra this year, it will be seen further afield in years to come, as will the commissioned musical work by Andrew Schultz, *Symphony No 3: Century* which had its world premiere here on the 11 March.

While much of the Centenary's arts program sought to profile the many excellent qualities of local artists, it should also be noted that Canberra saw the work of other major performing arts companies in addition to the Australian Ballet—the Sydney Theatre Company, Bell Shakespeare, Bangarra, Black Swan State Theatre company, Sydney Dance and the Australian Chamber Orchestra all gave terrific guest appearances. And all these added to the list of all those national institutions based here in the capital. In addition to the Australian Theatre Forum *To the Heart of It*, Canberra also hosted *Fear No Art*, the Australian Performing Arts Centre Association's national conference, which saw practitioners, producers and administrators from all over the country meet and debate in Canberra.

The project Portrait of a Nation acknowledged the streets of Canberra as a dictionary of Australian biography, and invited locals to research the famous and often forgotten Australians their streets are named after, and to celebrate them. The project had student project connections through the National Portrait Gallery and national connections to other places, through a Victorian schools' project for instance, where the name and the person also occurred.

The year has also been outstanding in terms of architecture and design: not only the new publication *One Hundred Canberra Houses* which gives an alternative history of the capital through its domestic architecture, and the publication of a noble history of engineering here in the last one hundred years, but in terms of actual construction such as Nishi, perhaps the most sustainable apartment building in the country, and the new Embassy of the Netherlands with similar environmental credentials, the Boundless all-abilities playground being established on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin through the generosity of contributions by public servants, the naming of the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, a new national rock garden (also lakeside), the new Scenentary Garden at Hennessy House, the re-establishment of

Constitution Avenue and of course the magnificent National Arboretum Canberra. The face of the city has changed.

Designers have been actively engaged throughout the year especially in the Legacy of Good Design project for which local craftspersons pitched prototypes which could be reproduced in number. A suite of five objects were then produced as quality memorabilia for the Centenary: they have been selling like hotcakes and it seems certain that this craft/reproduction model will leave a legacy for future years.

Architecture and design students have been engaged through projects like Shine a Light, and more particularly through two important hypotheticals—the Lodge on the Lake and the CAPITheticAL. The CAPITheticAL was an international design competition for a hypothetical capital for Australia in the twenty-first century. Administered on our behalf by the Australian Institute of Architects, the competition asked architects and designers to put themselves in the shoes of those 1911 competitors who responded to the original international competition for the new capital. We demanded of them that they engage with the history of the original competition, and in particular with questions about what the capital of a democratic country should be, what it should contain and what it should symbolise. We also provided provocations—if this is the Asian century should our capital be physically closer to Asia? If the Australian people eventually said yes to a republic, would there be the call for a new capital—and where would you start?

There were more than 1200 registrations of interest from nearly 30 countries and, in the end, 120 actual entries from 27 countries. The international multipliers represent a very sizeable promotional aspect of the competition: tens, if not hundreds, of thousands more people around the world are now aware of Canberra, perhaps for the first time. The expert jury reported that highest on the list of concerns were, predictably but satisfyingly, sustainability and the nature of democracy. The ultimate winner of the \$70,000 first prize was Ecoscape Australia, based in Fremantle, WA. It recommended maintaining the capital in Canberra, but through an ingenious set of references to the Griffin design, connected Canberra to a northern base which would be the administrative headquarters for Asian and Indigenous development. The hypothetical northern capital displayed heroic design for sustainability and great beauty on the shores of Lake Argyle.

The expert jury, chaired by Professor Barbara Norman, said:

the top three entries form an important and integrated narrative about the future challenges and the nation's capital, that include: better connecting to the north, our indigenous communities in that region and to SE Asia;

recognizing and responding to extreme weather and climate change and living with our environment; and embracing regional Australia as a critical consideration in our strategic national vision.⁵

Again—a simple competition, steeped in the history of the national capital, allowed a complex dialogue about Australia’s futures to evolve in a virtual space of international dimensions.

And on other international fronts, actual rather than virtual, the Centenary was equally active. Local artists DJs D’Opus and Roshambo said of their Centenary exchange project in Brasilia where they performed at the Cena Contemporânea: ‘We cannot express what a fantastic opportunity it was and the new creative spark it has given us for writing new music.’

Their exchange counterparts Sistema Criolina from Brasilia performed here in Canberra and were equally happy to have had this experience. The project has opened up new possibilities for exchange in the future, especially as Australia increasingly looks with business, educational and cultural eyes towards countries like Brazil.

Jyll Bradley is the award-winning British artist and creator of our sole directly commissioned international work, *City of Trees*, which was both a recorded sound project (which you can download from the Canberra 100 website) and an exhibition at the National Library of Australia. Jyll wrote:

there can be few honours greater than to be invited to take part in the centenary of a country’s capital city. I still have to pinch myself that this was so, and this privilege was mine ... Like Canberra perhaps, the show didn’t give itself away upfront, but required patience and discovery. For me the city is as much what you bring to it as it brings to you. In my own humble opinion I believe that this was what Walter and Marion had in mind. The city they created, whilst full of symbolism, is not an easy read, it’s a layering of events both personal and collective. It is the people who bring content to place, by way of symbiotic exchange. The city creeps up on you slowly, but once it’s under your skin it is so forever. I think on a deep psychological level this has been my abiding experience of the city, it’s in the water, the light, and the air and the trees.⁶

⁵ ‘CAPITheticAL winners’, *Architecture Australia*, vol. 102, no. 2, March 2013, <http://architectureau.com/articles/capithetical-winners/>.

⁶ *One Very Big Year Snapshot*, p. 48.

Ronan Moss of Canberra Lab, that exciting collective of young architects, participated in a large-scale installation of photographs at New York's Photoville festival as local Canberra photographers had work such as the Belco Boy shown against the New York skyline. Ronan reported enormous pride and pleasure to be able to make a project there:

it represented the 'changing spirit' of Canberra and the growing confidence of Belconnen, with its potent mix of students, public servants and communities from around the globe ... The work was about Canberra seen through a contemporary lens.⁷

In the capital itself, the recent Windows to the World acknowledged that often hidden aspect of Canberra—its around 100 diplomatic missions, and the incredible cultural richness they represent; Dean of Ambassadors and Commissioners, Pedro Delgado, Ambassador for Argentina, reported a sell-out success of this Spring program which allowed embassies to open their gates to allow the public to discover their gardens, architecture, food and other aspects of culture. It is a no-brainer, and hopefully will continue in future years

The participation of the diplomatic community has been exceptional all year with contributions to the program of the Canberra Symphony Orchestra, the anniversary of the unique relationship with France at Telopea Park School, a new Embassy of the Netherlands and their hosting of a solar car team and a quartet of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra coming up, and so many others.

Within the community, our collaboration with the Canberra Multicultural Forum, saw not only the important forum on the 'Future Journey of Democracy', but also the Harmony Day bus tours which took participants to diverse places of culture and worship throughout Canberra, including synagogue, Buddhist temple, Indigenous cultural centre and mosque.

On the international front we connected with India (where Centenary historian Dr Dave Headon and I were part of a memorial at Walter Burley Griffin's gravesite in Lucknow, and a design seminar in Delhi), and with London as I delivered the Arthur Boyd Memorial Lecture at Australia House where we met the late Lord Denman (whose predecessor had laid Canberra's foundation stone). This resulted in the current Lord and Lady Denman's visit for the March celebrations. I launched the Centenary program in Washington and in Chicago where I was privileged to be shown so much

⁷ Megan Doherty, 'Belco gets pride of place in New York', *Canberra Times*, 11 October 2013, <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/belco-gets-pride-of-place-in-new-york-20131011-2vctc.html>.

of Walter and Marion's architecture by that city's cultural historian (every city should have one), and we had those artist projects in Brasilia and New York, and performances from troupes from sister cities Nara and Beijing, as well as from Dili on the occasion of the re-signing of the friendship agreement with the ACT.

With all this great good news, and such overwhelmingly positive results for the Centenary of Canberra, I hesitate to return to the detractors—but alas I must, as my opportunities for advocating the importance of Canberra, though I shall always be its champion, will clearly diminish.

One of the chief goals of the Centenary of Canberra was to increase pride in the national capital. But we have to ask *why* would that even *need* to be a goal, one hundred years after the capital's naming, and a good 70 years since the start of its establishment? Well, in one of his first public statements, a recently elected member of this Parliament stated that he wouldn't be spending much time here because Canberra is a 'sterile' place. The Prime Minister himself said just a couple of weeks ago 'We don't want MPs hanging around Canberra all the time'. This is fair enough—one understands the need for elected members to be at home, working in their constituencies and gathering information nation- and world-wide, but unfortunately people *outside* the capital often misinterpret this as 'why would you want to hang around Canberra?'

Such sentiments have been reinforced time and again by the leaders of our country: Prime Minister Howard refused to live in the capital, and Prime Minister Keating who *did*, called it 'Australia's worst mistake'. Prime Minister Fraser agreed with him. And apart from the *Sydney Morning Herald's* architecture writer Elizabeth Farrelly who continues her naïve wish for Canberra to *be* Sydney, there is another small gaggle of curmudgeons who diss the capital at every opportunity. Given the opportunity to observe these detractors at close hand for four years and more by now, I suspect what links them all, and the reason for their unabated spleen, may be political disappointment—mainly blokes, who didn't achieve the political success or access or influence they sought, and blame the city for that self-perceived failure, rather than themselves and the choices they may have made.

I wonder if newly elected members, and members of the press gallery, get an introduction, an induction, to the city that will play host to their workplace for the next few years. And if not, I wonder if they *could* be given that opportunity. It is often said that members only ever see inside this house and their own apartments. Again, one understands the pressure of work, meetings, late night sittings, and the desire to get home to family and constituency—but I just wonder if they ever get real insight to the city and people beyond these walls. Canberra does not deserve just to be used and

abused. Hundreds of thousands of Australian citizens work to keep the city functional—the drivers, plumbers, gardeners, doctors, engineers, painters, artists, sports trainers, and public servants—all of them work hard to ensure the maintenance of a fine city which has proved for decades now its capacity to host federal government and a hundred international diplomatic missions, as well as fine scientific institutions and the care and protection of the nation’s cultural treasures.

There *are* good restaurants here, beautiful wineries, terrific local galleries and musea. And I speak not as a Canberran, but as an Adelaideian who has lived for long periods in Sydney, Melbourne, and London and enjoyed bigger cities like New York, Paris, Tokyo for lengthy periods and visited scores more. I know what I am talking about when I say that Canberra is a fine city with many sophisticated advantages, yet with the pleasures of living in a relaxed and very green country town. Many Australians understand this.

The loud, negative and sometimes influential handful are in fact out of touch with what the majority of Australians thought about Canberra more than six years ago when planning for the Centenary began, the majority of a large sample believing that the Centenary of Canberra was a celebration for all Australians. And so it has proved to be, with a genuine feeling of connection to the capital frequently and variously expressed throughout 2013. The artists, scientists, elite sportspersons, Masters sports participants, young sports participants, vintage car and caravan owners, the 500 humans who constituted the Human Brochure which tweeted and blogged tens of thousands of positive messages about the city, the record number of participants and visitors in Canberra this year, all agree that Canberra is a pleasurable and entertaining city, safe, full of smarts and clean high country air.

Most importantly, even as we all rightfully and dutifully take an excited interest in what goes on within these walls, the nation-building projects which are decided here, the debate which occurs around them, we also need to acknowledge that Canberra is a place worthy of its status as the place where all this occurs. My hope is that we increasingly see that pride reflected from the top, from up here, and communicated honestly, not in ignorance, through Australian and global media.



Question — We are the lucky ones who live in Canberra. We can do all of this. We have to resist the media using the word ‘Canberra’ when they mean the federal

government! The two magnificent books which are available in the foyer here—are they being posted free to every school and every public library in Australia?

Robyn Archer — The simple answer to the question is no, but it can all be accessed through the website. We still have a few of them left, and they will be in libraries.

Question — Can corporate bodies or philanthropists be encouraged to have photographed the unmissable-type activities of which you spoke so that they can then be recorded on a DVD and made available—maybe at a cost, maybe free—to the ABC and then available to every school, senior people, to Australia, via TV?

Robyn Archer — There are a couple of things there. As to your first comment about the media using ‘Canberra’ as a substitute for ‘government’, in fact our research showed that when it was bad news it was ‘Canberra’, when it was good news it was ‘the federal government’. However, it was the subject of my National Press Club address in the middle of 2012—and it hasn’t done a blind bit of good, I can tell you! I kind of never thought it would but, boy, hasn’t it! It is just everywhere and frequently now, alas, on the ABC as well.

As to the availability of the stuff, we have got hundreds and thousands of photographs and we are compiling, as it were, ‘wrap’ documents which will be online and a few of which will be printed, but we just do not have the budget to do it. Festivals have a thing called post-festival depression, and normally they are only two or three weeks. Well, we have had a year of it and we are experiencing the longest, most difficult time while the work is thundering. I have something like 11 commitments—public addresses—in the next week alone, and the program does not really finish until mid-December. We have got staff starting to move on to other jobs already. I think at the very end, probably in January, there will be four people left that were originally there from the beginning. So it is a sad period.

But be aware that kids in particular can access the internet through their schools and it is probably more important for us to send out a wide message to say, ‘Have a look at it before it goes’. Our National Library is archiving at least that, probably the Canberra Diaspora as well, and One River will be up there for a while. So there will be a lot of evidence. If you go to the website now there is a lot. But, you know, snap up the books and send them to your friends, for sure.

Question — I had the great good fortune of working in this building for many years, but I have had also had the greatest of pleasure working as a volunteer this year for the Canberra centenary. Can I ask: will there be a gentle follow-up to this year? Can we not go into a deep despair of moving on from the centenary? Can we not go into

that depression? But will we be able to—through the Canberra Theatre, perhaps—keep bringing wonderful shows from the other states and territories, keeping that wonderful connection going and finding other ways with our Indigenous people to continue telling the story of the river and many other opportunities that must be out there to continue to connect Canberra in the strongest possible way?

Robyn Archer — I think, because of the year, Canberra is a much easier sell now. I think the mood has changed enormously. I will take the opportunity to thank you and all the volunteers. As in any major event, the volunteers in Canberra have been absolutely superb and they have really turned out and received lots of good rewards at Windows to the World, where suddenly they themselves got to sit inside the embassies, and have a good time.

As to the flow, I did say four years ago—and this is sort of what is happening—that I did not think that there should be any kind of big finish to the centenary. It has been suggested that any number of events—including the Voices in the Forest, which is at the Arboretum next weekend and which I hope my virus will spare me to still be able to sing at—could be used as a sort of big ending event, and I said all along I did not want there to be an ending. What I wanted is that by the time we hit spring, we would pretty much know whether the year had been a success, and we did, and it was. But, by spring, the healthiest reflection would be that people were starting to talk about next year and the next 10 and 20 and 100 years, and I do think that that is kind of happening. I would rather that there not be an ending as such, but just saying, ‘Okay, well that has been a great year and now we are just moving on’.

And I think part of the answer around that is in this changed infrastructure. Even though our brief wasn’t exactly infrastructure, there has been a lot of new stuff gone up. It does look a bit different around the place. But more, perhaps, significantly is the ephemeral notion of ‘the mood’. The mood is definitely up. I have been saying to a lot of people recently that the success of a program is very much in the uptake of your audience and your community. Those big books that the lady before was referring to are a blueprint. They came out, one in September and one in March, to indicate what we would be doing, but they are just the plan. So, if people don’t take it up, then it doesn’t exist, in a way.

And what has been the greatest reward, as people ask us. You know, the inevitable KPIs—how do you measure your success? One of my greatest measures of success is that the community responded so generously, that they came, that shows and events were booked out and that they spontaneously did things. Not only have we had volunteers coming in but many people proposed projects of their own accord and just went out and did them. One of the most remarkable, of course, is this program that

was called The Musical Offering, which has seen more than, I think, 600 performances, all free to the public this year, but absolutely one on every day of the year—and I sang myself at the 300th day, at the National Portrait Gallery, a few weeks ago. This was just done by citizens. They decided that they were going to have a free musical event every year—and there have been hundreds of those kinds of things. So, in a sense, that is the success and I think that is what has lifted the mood.

How the ACT Government leverages off this success is really over to them. That is the next important way of saying: will there be bits of actual things that went on that may be repeated? Windows to the World is a good example. The parties at the shops is a great example. Daughter of Skywhale, of course, is what you all want to see! I jest, although she is going up in Melbourne. She has had many great subsequent visits and is up in Melbourne on December the first or second, I think. But what is more important for me is that I know that Canberra quite often, at any change of government, can get a bit gloomy. There are shifts in the public service and employment. What I had always hoped was that with a federal election as part of this year that maybe the buoyant mood of the centenary would keep people's spirits up, moving in a rather more positive way. Certainly, from the feedback that I get, that is the case, and what is most important is that so many people have been out and seeing things and there have been so many more visitors to the capital this year so far. That is what we need to preserve. It needs to be that great spirit to carry forward.

Somebody, very kindly, at the Business Council gala dinner the other night, thanked me for the work that I had done, and I was at great pains to say, 'Well, I am just that creature out the front of the ship, breasts to the wind—and very exposed from time to time, I might say! But behind me I have a massively well-constructed, beautifully functioning ship of a team that has been responsible really for the delivery of this. But somebody expressed to me at that dinner that quite often I used the word the 'infancy' of early Canberra. Many people have been talking about its recent history as its adolescence, and somebody said to me the other night: 'We feel that what the year has done has tipped it from adolescence into that over-18 period. It has actually come of age. It has actually matured'. And that, I think, is the hope of the future for the city. Its potential is great. The conversations that the ACT has around the futures are very healthy. There is a lot of planning going on, and I think just the uplifting of the profile of a good twenty-first century city, in which this house sits and all that major national stuff goes on, as well as in the institutions. That is the kind of nice fit that we would like to see in the future—equally praised, equally valued.