Professor Jude Butcher cfc AM
Director, Institute for Advancing Community Engagement

Professor Gail Crossley
Dean of Arts and Sciences

People and communities have always expressed their identities, hopes, joys and sorrows through arts and culture. This integral role of the arts and culture in community engagement and development is very evident in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences community engagement projects presented in this newsletter.

The communities and the University have given expression, through literature, drama, music and art, to the beauty, richness, complexity and hope of people's lives. The arts and culture ensure that there is a shared value base for community engagement such as that reported for Australian Catholic University and Brisbane North.

This newsletter is also available to download online @ www.iace.acu.edu.au

“Our focus on life-long learning in Arts works within partnerships with churches, hospitals, choirs and theatre in social contexts developed with Catholic hospitals, Catalyst, Conservatorium of Music, Queensland Art Gallery, schools and various community arts collaborators.”

- Brisbane Faculty of Arts and Sciences Perspective on Community Engagement

A good summary of ACU's Community Engagement in the Arts is provided by the Brisbane School of Arts and Sciences in its published Perspective on Community Engagement.

**ITS GIVEN AIMS ARE:**

- to develop “Community Arts partnerships” and engagement through our distinctive Catholic identity in teaching, research and community engagement;

- for our School’s teaching, research and community partnerships to have a distinctive focus. This focus contrasts with other universities’ focuses on arts practice, fine arts / theory or creative industries.

The “Community Arts partnerships” approach allows specialisation, and integration, in the disciplines of music, drama and visual arts as they intersect with human services.

**TODAY’S TOP STORIES**

- Transformation in Clemente Australia Program
- Dramatic Involvement
- On Show - With a Purpose
**TRANSFORMATION IN CLEMENTE AUSTRALIA PROGRAM**

The transformative power of engagement with the Arts is evident in Clemente Australia programs given by Associate Professor Michael Griffith (of the Strathfield campus School of Arts and Sciences).

Professor Griffith invited author David Malouf (his own former lecturer at the University of Sydney) to meet the students in the Clemente Australia program, after their three-week study of Malouf’s novel *Remembering Babylon*. Author, lecturer and students all said they had benefited from the occasion.

Michael had specifically chosen the novel “because of its focus on the marginalised character Gemmy and his role in bringing new perspectives in ‘how to be’ to enlightened members of the colonial community.”

**QUESTION FOR US ALL**

Of the book, Michael Griffith says –

“*I always feel that David is throwing down the gauntlet to contemporary Australia in his epigraph: “Whether this is Jerusalem or Babylon I know not - Jerusalem, a place of potential harmony for humans of all races – or Babylon, a place where cacophonous voices of misunderstanding and hatred continue and grow.”*

**LITERATURE UNITS ENGAGEMENT**

Michael teaches units on Introduction to Literature and Sacred Australia both on campus and in the Clemente Australia program, in which ACU is a partner with Mission Australia, the St Vincent de Paul Society, The Smith Family and other agencies.

“Many of these students have a deeply personal understanding of the human issues that lie at the heart of great literature and find themselves powerfully engaged,” reports Associate Professor Griffith.

**OTHER CLEMENTE ARTS EXPERIENCES**

In 2009, as well as taking part in the literature courses and the author visit, the students visited the NSW Art Gallery and worked with Clemente Australia partner Bell Shakespeare to produce, for public performance, scenes from Michael Gow’s play “Away”, which they had studied. The performance gave a public opportunity to celebrate the work of the students.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BENEFITS FOR THE LECTURER**

Michael Griffith says he has found this teaching “immensely rewarding, not only because these students have a real hunger and are hugely receptive, but also because the stories they have to share are profound and moving.”

**EMPOWERING FOR THE STUDENTS**

- **Personal engagement with literature** – brings joy of learning and a starting point for their own writing and emancipation.
- **Group bonding** – the study helps knit the small community, who come from all areas of “the streets”, and from many different cultures, including China, Vietnam, England, Spain and Australia.
- **Growing self-confidence** – comes from the students’ writing of their own stories and poems, which follows from studying great writers’ texts.

“The incredible thing is that I am now taking the necessary steps to make the move away from that dead end job I despised. The most interesting point is that management, my once imagined jailers, are doing all they can to assist me in making this necessary change. I am eternally grateful. It all came about after my severe bout of...”
Where to from here, after the 2009 Clemente course?

LECTURER

“It has been a fabulous experience for me personally so far, taking my 35 years of university teaching out into a different arena and finding its value and power to some people who really seem to benefit, intellectually, emotionally and creatively.”

- Associate Professor Michael Griffith

STUDENT

“The future will bring more: more courses, more camaraderie, more friendships and more learning. I just love learning new things. Not just because I get something extra to add to my CV, but for its own sake. Learning academic subjects is thrilling. And I'm not exaggerating! I just love it.

What a way to expand the mind. I'm already looking forward to next semester's Clemente Australia program which includes courses in art history / theory and sociology. These sound amazing. I'm just salivating at the thought of them! Especially sociology as I've never studied that before.”

- Student Tim Tari

LITERARY DEVELOPMENT

The students now have the literary and artistic influences to express themselves more capably. Frederick Hama, speaks on his blog of writing “in the tradition of Shakespeare's Henry V, of C.S. Lewis and Tolkien”.

Jack Franko wrote a poem, “Another Skin”, which he says was inspired by Malouf's Remembering Babylon as well as Botticelli's Birth of Venus and descriptions from Pliny, Leonidas, Antipater of Sidon and Ovid's Metamorphoses.

CHOIR SOUTH

The ACU Choir at the Melbourne campus (above), under the direction of Andrew Wailes and co-ordination of Dr Tim McKenry, is not only an ambitious musical ensemble but one which regularly engages with, and brings much joy to, various community groups.

In 2009 such engagement included:

(i) providing fine music for our wider University
In keeping with the perspective above the School continued with its partnerships with the Brisbane Catholic Education Commission, with the Mission Australia Clemente Australia (Catalyst) project and with many newly devised projects with local groups.

ACU drama productions, which engaged with local communities, included:

- **Night of Vaudeville** - presenting song, dance, patter routines and chorus girls, in 1940s style.
- **Pre-school story telling** at a local childcare centre – a project which explored early childhood literacy and performance.
- **Queensland Country Fair** - celebrating 150 years of Queensland life. This festival celebrated Q150 with many school students and the ACU community recreating the 1800s with colonial song, dance, food and fun.
- **A “Midsummer Night’s Dream”** - performed by advanced Bachelor of Arts drama students, which involved the wider University in this delightful outdoor production.
- **Skating on Sandgate Road** - a collaboration between ACU, The Golden Years Seniors Centre and award-winning Queensland playwrights, Margery and Michael Forde, played to over 300 people at The Golden Years Centre.

This thought-provoking play, funded by the State Government for the Q150 celebrations, traced the lives and memories of 16 seniors from the Nundah district, giving benefit to those who provided the reminiscences. At the same time, there was a transformation in the way the students viewed the reality of the past.

The Brisbane Campus Choir, under Music Senior Lecturer Judy Fromyhr's direction, has had another year involved in numerous community events with reciprocal benefits to the University and its partners. In 2009, it has sung with other communities at:

- St Stephen's Cathedral with special outreach in Christmas and children’s choir services;
- Royal School of Church Music occasions;
- Queensland Conservatorium of Music and Art Gallery;
- Young Voices Festival (with Brisbane's best youth choirs), hosted by ACU;
- ACU art show openings;
- Concerts on campus in the auditorium and Chapel with invited guest choirs.

*The Mary MacKillop trip was “a once in a lifetime experience…. we hope that our performances conveyed the spirit in which she lived.”*

- chorister Alex Twining, Second Year Bachelor of Arts / Bachelor of Music

**CHOIR NORTH**

The Brisbane Campus Choir, under Music Senior Lecturer Judy Fromyhr's direction, has had another year involved in numerous community events with reciprocal benefits to the University and its partners.

**DRAMATIC INVOLVEMENT**

(ii) a visit to the communities of Portland and Mount Gambier (in S.A.) with a specially commissioned Mary MacKillop Mass by Melbourne composer, Nicholas Buc, for the centenary of Blessed Mary’s death. The choir was partnered by the Royal Philharmonic Choir and the Portland Festival Singers, with a repeat performance in ACU's Central Hall with the Box Hill Chorale Society.

(iii) musical partnership with the choir and orchestra of St Francis’ Church Lonsdale Street for Haydn’s Nelson Mass, under the direction of Richard Divall at the church and later to a capacity audience at the Melbourne Town Hall with the Royal Philharmonic Choral Society, the Melbourne University Choral Society and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, under the baton of Andrew Wailes.

(iv) taking part in the premiere performance at the Town Hall concert of Karl Jenkins’s “The Armed Man – A Mass for Peace”.

**It was a wonderful opportunity to build bridges and understanding between the generations.”**

- Mr Don Rudd, manager of the Golden Years Centre
• Art from the Inside – an exhibition of art by prisoners in Queensland Correctional Centres;

• Art from the Heart exhibition – a collection of paintings by refugees.

Dr Lindsay Farrell, Head, School of Arts and Sciences (QLD) and organiser of many of the Brisbane campus exhibitions

The Melbourne campus gallery in 2009 had exhibitions from people from a range of cultural backgrounds including:

• People from the Horn of Africa;

• Sudanese women and children;

• Vietnamese families;

• People from the Atherton Gardens housing estate;

• Students from the Clemente Australia program; and

• People from the Creative Ministries Network Aboriginal Art Access Studio.

ON SHOW - WITH A PURPOSE

Many art exhibitions at the Banyo campus in 2009 were not just displays of artefacts and paintings, but were the results of meaningful engagement with the wider community and its history, and with groups who would not otherwise be exhibiting.

These included:

• My Home My History exhibition - on the Italian homes of North Queensland. This event presented research presentations and discussions about art and architecture in Queensland's socio-cultural contexts;

L-R: Students from “Skating on Sandgate Road” - Michelle Haynes, Sinead O’Kane, Megan Hancock and Linda Seiler

L-R: students in “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” - Megan Hancock, Nastasia Clark and Catherine Martin

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At one of the Melbourne campus Indigenous artists’ exhibitions

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Associate Professor Nasir Butrous of the ACU Brisbane Campus School of Business (the School of Business was formerly part of the School of Arts and Science)

Professor Butrous leads an impressively large number of Community Engagement activities with local business, government departments and community partners.

These include:

(i) Brisbane North Development Forum, a regional economic development organisation promoting a sustainable and livable future for the region. It is well supported by major businesses such as Brisbane Airport Corporation, Brisbane North Chamber of Commerce, Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry, Brisbane City Council and local political representatives.

(ii) Agenda North Forum, an initiative of Associate Professor Butrous, involving the above partners in planning for “green business” projects. In forum meetings the University is able to take initiative by providing speakers, planning and support.

(iii) Building Bridges with the Business Community, a project which engages the University and community in meeting the training and developmental needs of the local business community while providing the foundation for leadership and direct participation with the local community.

(iv) North Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance, which provides opportunities for collaborative activities, shared information and joint grant applications.

(v) Nundah Golden Years Senior Centre strategic management, where Business students work with the Centre as a real case study, providing for the Centre the benefit of numerous strategic plan reports, while the students receive the benefit of completing their course unit of study in a topical and successful way.

“We work closely with the local community building strong relationships that support the needs of business and the wider community.”

- Associate Professor Nasir Butrous

From business to drama, literature, art and music, ACU staff and students continue to advance Community Engagement with local community groups creating genuine mutual benefit and transformation.