

BLITS E-Newsletter December 2010



Message from the Chair

Welcome to the final newsletter for 2010.

On behalf of the BLITS Board and management may I take this opportunity to wish you, your family and loved ones a happy and safe Christmas and New Year.

Included in the items in this newsletter is an article covering the 2010 ACT Chief Minister's Inclusion Awards Sponsors thank you lunch. On a similar topic, we are delighted to announce that Fiona Wright, a Canberra catering icon and BLITS Champion, will be joining as a major sponsor of the 2011 ACT Chief Minister's Inclusion Award program. Welcome and thank you for your support Fiona!

I would also like to take the opportunity to introduce and publically welcome four new board members onto the BLITS Board, welcome to **Cindy Young**, General Manager of the National Convention Centre Canberra, **Harriet Elvin**, Chief Executive Officer, Cultural Facilities Corporation Canberra, **Craig Wallace**, Marketing and Project Manager, NICAN and **Gavin MacDonald**, Senior Sports Analyst, Australian Sports Commission.

I hope you enjoy this issue of BLITS E-News. Included is an article in the 'Powerful Profile' segment that features Canberra's very own 'Dr. Possum'. Dr Possum, (aka Christopher McLaughlan) has a truly inspirational story to tell and he shared his story at the 2010 Chief Minister's Inclusion Awards in October this year.

Through the introductions made during the ACT BLITS Arts Roundtable earlier in the year, Dr Possum will be launching a new exhibition of his artwork at the National Convention Centre in March next year. If you would like to read Dr Possum's speech from the awards night, and I can highly recommend that you do, please use the link in the E-News section of the BLITS website or download it directly from Dr Possum Speech - Oct 2010.



Congratulations to Frank Crews, Executive Officer of BLITS and his partner Amanda on the arrival of their delightful little baby girl, Liberty.

Once again, the best to you for the holiday season and we look forward to seeing you in the New Year.

Lois Ford

Chair

BLITS ACT

In this newsletter:

* **Powerful Profile - Dr Possum**

* **BLITS Arts and Disability Round Table**

* **Chief Minister's Inclusion Awards Sponsors Thanked**



Powerful Profile - 'Dr Possum' aka Christopher McLaughlan

Christopher was diagnosed with autism at the age of three. His mother Lorraine was told that it would be best if he was institutionalised as it was likely he would never be able to recognise her as his mother. Lorraine resisted this advice and went on to raise Christopher, and his four brothers single handedly.

(photo right: Dr Possum addresses the audience at the 2010 ACT Chief Minister's Inclusion Awards, 10/2010)

At the age of nine Christopher spoke his first spontaneous sentences. He became well known throughout the neighbourhood for his escapisms and indeed well known to the police, as it was them who often bought him back home. In those early days Lorraine worked intuitively with her son, and today much of what she did is commonplace and in line with what is considered best practice.

Christopher is now an artist with an established body of work and pieces in private collections Australia wide. He continues to work from his home in the outer Canberra suburb of Kambah. Arts Support worker Karyn Fearnside assists one day a week, encouraging and supporting his artistic development, troubleshooting and fine-tuning projects and of course working closely with Christopher and his family to ensure positive outcomes.

Working predominantly in digital media with the computer as his main creative tool, Dr. Possum has developed his own unique style. Fascinated with science fiction, especially spaceships and alien planets he creates computer generated images (often working pixel by pixel) to accompany his yet to be fully realised series of Sci-Fi stories, animated children's movie, television series and range of merchandise.

On seeing Dr Possum's work the viewer is invited to take a journey into a world of imagination, and is always refreshed and uplifted by the experience.

Dealing sub-texturally with ideas of social morality, family, place and belonging Dr. Possum's art explores age old themes of the human condition through a lens of pop culture and outsider identity. Dr. Possum's work manages to hold a naive; almost kitsch charm that appeals instantly to children and to the dreamer in us all yet it has far more to offer than the surface may at first reveal.

Dr Possum dreams giant dreams, he sees his artworks, stories and animations becoming TV episodes with an associated line of toys and merchandise. Dr. Possum is confident that children around the globe will love his stories and characters.

Dr. Possum holds a Diploma of Art, (Visual), Institute of the Arts, ANU, Canberra, (majoring in Textiles, graduating in 1996).

BLITS Arts and Disability Round Table

In July this year the Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services Joy Birch MLA chaired the BLITS Arts Round Table. BLITS Champion Jeremy Lasek (Executive Director of the Arts, Communications Events and Protocol Division, Chief Minister's Department) facilitated the event which was well attended by Canberra business leaders, BLITS Board Members and arts industry representatives.

Andy Heaney, Manager of the ACT Community Arts Office delivered a high impact presentation on the quality of work and inspirational story of Dr Possum. Andy also presented a background and update of the breathtaking efforts of independent community arts worker Morgan Jai-Morincome through her Radiance Dance group and other dance programs.

The round table highlighted the need for more funding and support for community based arts activities. Several new offers of support have come out of the event and follow up workshops are planned in 2011 to identify more areas of possible support.

Watch out for the Dr Possum exhibition at the National Convention Centre Canberra in March 2011.

ACT Chief Ministers Inclusion Awards - Valued Sponsors Recognised

The ACT Chief Ministers Inclusion Awards Sponsors thank you luncheon was held on 30 November at the ActewAGL Art Gallery in Bunda Street Civic.

ACT Chief Minister Jon Stanhope addressed the gathered sponsors and award winners thanking the sponsors for their continued support of this important program and congratulating the winners on the recognition of their hard work and contributions.



The ACT Chief Minister Jon Stanhope presents a certificate of recognition to Principle Sponsors: ; (l to r) John Gaudry of Maximus Solutions and Shani Trovatiello, Drake Medox

Judging panel members were also present and represented by Chair of Judges Craig Wallace.

As it turned out, the event generated its own good news story on the day. The sponsors luncheon held in the gallery, was catered by one of Canberra's most highly anticipated new restaurants Dieci e Mezzo, operating from the restaurant premises literally next to the ActewAGL Art Gallery space. Owned and operated by BLITS Champion Fiona Wright, Fiona attended this event and was moved to announce, during the course of the celebrations, her decision to make a major commitment to the award program, joining as a significant awards sponsor in 2011. Thank you Fiona and welcome on board!



The ACT Chief Minister Jon Stanhope presents a certificate of recognition to Award Partner Partners; (l to r) Miranda Garnett, Koomarri; Ayesha Razzaq, ActewAGL and Lois Ford, Disability ACT.

Thank you once again to all our sponsors including our media partners: PRIME; The Canberra Times; Capital Magazine; B2B in Canberra; 104.7 and MIX 106.3 and the Content Group.