

Michelle Belgiorno's 24th DDP Speech

Thank you Kristen....

Tonight's dynamic exhibition is the legacy of Bill Dobell, a gifted draughtsman, and well know Australian artist, who in fact was a well-loved teacher at the NAS in the late 1930s and 40s.

The Dobell Art Foundation was established in 1971 with instructions by Dobell for the proceeds of his estate to be invested and applied "for the benefit and promotion of art in NSW".

Since its establishment more than 50 years ago the Dobell Art Foundation has supported many artists and sponsored a wide variety of arts projects, including major commissions, gallery acquisitions, artist residencies, exhibitions and much more, to the tune of around \$10 million.

Today Our mission is focussed on:

- directly supporting artists
- funding art education and
- outreach to regional communities

We are a small team of volunteers. We partner with respected institutions like NAS to maintain a dynamic arts ecosystem that is flourishing and regenerative.

The DDP is one of our flagship programs. Initially established in 1993 at the AGNSW it successfully transitioned to the NAS in 2019.

It is an open, democratic and competitive platform for artists to exhibit their work both in Sydney and on tour to Regional Galleries around the state.

Exhibitions like this provide artists exposure, not only to the public, but also to curators and gallerists, which can open career opportunities.

The impact of the exhibition is greatly expanded being managed by the NAS an educational institution. The added benefits include:

- The exhibition and accompanying public programs are incorporated into the NAS academic program
- the winning work is added to the NAS Collection

- Talented Year 11 students from regional public schools who attend an intensive 4 day drawing workshop at NAS can see and learn firsthand from the diversity of drawings on display.
- The exhibition tours to regional galleries. Here I would like to acknowledge the incredible support of Chris Hodges and Helen Eager. Their generous donation to the Dobell Foundation has made possible regional touring of this 24th DDP to five (?) regional galleries.
- And finally, regional visual arts teachers attending the Dobell Teacher Training Course can be inspired by the touring exhibition in the town of the course

So, you can see the impact is **broad and deep**.

To close, I must sincerely thank our three judges: artist Vernon Ah Kee, NAS Head of Post Graduate Studies Dr Yolanda Hickman, and my exceedingly valued fellow Dobell trustee, Paula Latos Valier, for your dedication and expertise.

Having previously been a judge of this Prize I know much time and consideration it takes to carefully review so many amazing works and to reduce them down to approx. 60 finalists

Thanks also to Gallery Director Katrina Cashman and the curator Lucy Latella for bringing it all together.

A finally a big Congratulations to all the finalists and especially the winner, who we will hear about now from Vernon.