

**EU Film Award 2009 presentation at
Australian Film Television & Radio School**

23 July 2009

**Speech by John Richards, Counsellor,
Delegation of the European Commission**

Sandra Levy, Graham Thorburn, colleagues from the diplomatic corps, distinguished guests, friends and students of AFTRS

It is my pleasure to be here at AFTRS today at the presentation of the EU Film Award.

This event is one of the highlights in our year. The EU has sponsored this Award with AFTRS since 2003 and the feedback we have received from past winners has been nothing short of outstanding. And we have already heard from the 2009 winner, Rebecca, of her experiences at the Brussels International Film Festival.

This Award would not be possible without the cooperation of the EU Member States and the respective European film festivals. While travel costs to the festival are sponsored by the Commission, the Member State embassies put forward each year the European film festival, which will host the Australian Award winner as a special guest at the festival.

We have a different festival each year to maximise the diversity of experience. Access to the full benefits of the festival are accorded the winner, presenting valuable opportunities for learning the latest techniques being used in European cinema and, even more importantly, developing a network with other film makers from across the world.

For instance, the first winner in 2003, Mike Daly, attended the Berlin Film Festival. He has reported back that he remains in contact with many of the professionals he met. While he was in Berlin he learnt German and then returned to live in Berlin to work in the German film industry.

We received similar glowing reports from Harrison Chadd winner of the 2004 Award, who attended the Viennale. He described his experiences in Vienna as "life-changing". Subsequent winners attending film festivals in Ghent, Marseilles, Valladolid and San Sebastian have been equally complimentary

And of course we are very pleased to be associated with AFTRS, and in this regard, I would like to thank Graham Thorburn and his colleagues very much for the effort required in organising the Award.

AFTRS has produced some of the biggest names in the industry and has built an international reputation for excellence. Many of the household names we hear of today, have received their training at this school. The courses on offer are renowned for being innovative and of a high international standard, reflecting the excellent management and teaching the school has enjoyed since it started in 1973.

And here is the appropriate point also to thank the work of our staff in the Delegation, particularly Roger Camilleri, for their efforts in giving this award so much significance.

The question I hear you murmur though is **why** does the EU do this?

Well there are many reasons. The first that springs to mind is that to be involved in this type of event is a lot more enjoyable than, for example, negotiations on the mutual recognition of widgets, worthy though this may be.

Seriously, through this Award we have the opportunity to show Australians that the EU has a lot more to offer than as a trading partner. That the EU is Australia's largest partner in two way trade and the largest source of inward investment in Australia is very important, but people-to-people contacts are what make the EU-Australia relationship live.

When it comes to culture, Europe is hard to beat. And it is the diversity of that culture that is truly European. What better way to show Europe's diversity than through the popular medium of cinema. European cinema has a reputation of compelling story telling, of being moving and invigorating. Through this Award, we seek to share some of these traits with Australia's future leading film-makers.

This Award complements the numerous film festivals shown by our Member States throughout the year in Australia. Indeed our European film festival *Windows on Europe* has grown from a purely Canberra event, to one being screened in Sydney, Brisbane and from next year, Melbourne and also Wellington.

But that's enough from me. It is now my pleasure to introduce Ambassador Frank Carruet from the Embassy of Belgium to present the prize to the 2009 winner who recently returned from this year's festival, the Brussels International Film Festival.

Ladies and Gentlemen, H.E. Ambassador Frank Carruet.