



# 50 Years of W.A. TV

## 2009 Exhibition Report



## Introduction

To celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the introduction of public television broadcasting to Western Australia, the Australian Museum of Motion Picture Technology (Inc.) presented the biggest display of television equipment and memorabilia ever assembled in the State. The object of the exhibition was to create a community awareness of the tremendous advances in the industry's technology over the past 50 years and to document the efforts and stories of those who contributed to its success.

## The location

The Exhibition was presented in the convict built and heritage listed Fremantle Arts Centre, Finnerty Street, Fremantle. The building, originally designed as a lunatic asylum, had until recently housed the Fremantle History Museum. The free exhibition was open to the public every day from 10 am to 4 pm between October 5<sup>th</sup> and December 6<sup>th</sup>.



*The Fremantle Arts Centre*

## The budget

The event cost \$18,500 to stage, of which a total of \$5,000 was provided by the main sponsors, the City of Fremantle and ScreenWest. The balance was provided by other contributions and donations during the event. A significant value was placed on the contribution of volunteer labour and materials.



*Part of the project team selecting photos for display*

A core team of twelve AMMPT members was involved during the planning, set-up and dismantling of the exhibition. Their efforts were supplemented by twenty four rostered display attendants.

## Other assistance

The Western Australian Museum and the Fremantle Arts Centre both were supportive of the project, providing gratis access to the gallery and donation of display hardware. The cooperation of the metropolitan TV channels 2, 7, 9 & 10 and GWN in Bunbury with the provision of their archival material also contributed significantly to its success. Electrical retailer Harvey Norman in O'Connor provided large LCD screens for the video displays as well as providing concession pricing for the hundreds of photographs required.

## The official opening

The official opening was performed by The Honourable John Day, Minister for Culture and the Arts, on Wednesday 7th October 2009.



Master of Ceremonies was veteran TV News director Terry Spence. The event was attended by other industry pioneers and presenters such as Earl Reeve, and TV executives. The Minister spoke on the rapid change of technology and emphasised the need to preserve the industry's heritage.

*Left: The Hon. John Day opens the exhibition  
Master of Ceremonies Terry Spence looks on*

AMMPT President Daryl Binning thanked the members, sponsors and supporters. He stressed the need to harness the collaborative forces of the mainstream museum sector, local government and volunteer community museums. "Mainstream museums" for their professionalism and technical expertise, "local government" for assistance with providing exhibition space which delivers new tourist attractions, and "volunteer community museum groups" with a passion and intimate knowledge of their specialised areas of display.



*Some colour was added to official proceedings with appearance of station mascots Humphrey Bear, Flapper and Dooper Dog*

## Visitors

Over six and a half thousand visitors attended the exhibition. This included several groups of school children, university students, Senior Citizens and Retirement Village residents, many arriving in chartered tour buses from all over the metropolitan area. Several interstate visitors who were in Perth to attend the TVW reunion were also impressed with the display. The unanimous theme of appreciation and satisfaction posted in the “comments” book was evidence of the exhibition achieving its objective. A representative selection of them are included at the end of this report.



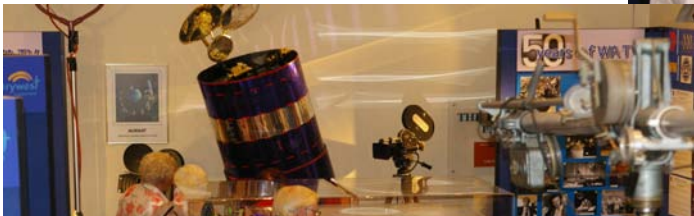
A special technical presentation was held for members of the Australian Cinematographers Society and other interested industry personnel. Veteran cameramen explained the inner

workings of vintage television equipment to the younger professionals, many of whom found it hard to imagine the effort required to manoeuvre the old and heavy apparatus.

## Items displayed

A very wide range of equipment, photographs and industry related memorabilia was assembled, much of it from AMMPT's own inventory which was supplemented from Members' private collections. Other items such as an AUSSAT satellite model on loan from Optus and equipment donated by the television stations also added to the experience.

Interactive displays of objects and inventions from the very early days of moving image devices including two Mutoscopes, a Phenakistoscope and a Zoetrope helped engage the younger generation, while industry veterans reminisced as they handled items they had not operated for nearly fifty years.



*Pioneers of Perth commercial television, Coralie Condon (left) and Audrey Long (Barnaby) were amongst the many regular veteran industry volunteer guides at the exhibition.*

## Unique items

Amongst the many unique items being exhibited were several of particular historical significance to Western Australia. These included the first operational television transmitter/receiver system in the State, built by a radio ham, Blake Horrocks in Harvey during 1936.



The first television transmission licences issued in WA by the Post Master General's department several years before commercial TV was introduced were to three local radio hams. Details of these people and the restrictions on their licences were also featured.

*The original Horrocks television equipment display & photo gallery*

Also on display were the official programme and press cuttings of the first Western Australian public television demonstration in the Perth Town Hall in 1949 arranged by the Shell Oil Company.

Another popular attraction was the Stumpcam, devised by the engineers at STW9 in Perth. The system was further developed by the Nine Network and led to the international adoption of the concept of TV sports coverage from right in the middle of the action.

## Conclusion

The public response to the exhibition exceeded the project team's expectation. To enable out-of-town and interstate members to view the exhibition and for archival purposes, AMMPT arranged for video coverage of the event. This will be made available on a DVD and also featured on our website. Photographs used in the display will be archived for use in future exhibitions, along with others that have been, and continue to be donated to the collection.

The mixture of nostalgia, entertainment and discovery proved to be a guaranteed recipe for success and a basis upon which future exhibitions will be designed. The event also proved the public acceptance of, and need for special purpose, community orientated, volunteer operated museums.

All supporting entities who contributed to the success of the event should be pleased with the public relations value and promotion they received.

Derric Wright  
Chairman, Exhibition planning group.

## Visitors' comments

The following are a few extracts from some hundreds of comments left in the visitors' book.

*"Keep up the preservation so we remember our history – Thanks for looking after the present"*

*"Very good exhibition. Makes us remember many viable talents lost to technology"*

*"I love the exhibition. It is interesting and educational, which is all that matters to me"*

*"Loved the old TV's and the way the photos show how TV captured changes in Australian society"*

*"A wonderful tribute to the birth of TV in WA. The faces and names are a sound reminder of local TV history. A tremendous display"*

*"Excellent – well done. Thanks for a great Horrocks display"*

*"Our Friendship Clubs enjoyed this exhibition immensely" Alzheimer's WA*

*"My Grandad is so young!"*

*"I am a graduate in the media arts looking to get into the field of TV & film. It is amazing to see how broadcasting has developed over the years, Brilliant!"*

*"Very interesting and well worth the visit" Visitor from Wales UK*

*"Congratulations, an extremely good exhibition variety and very relevant technology of the times"*

*"Great record of history. Well done to assembly team" Visitor from Geelong*

*"Nice work. Great idea to have "hands-on" things"*

*"Thanks for the opportunity to see such a wonderful display of our past TV"*

*"A brilliant collection and exhibition well presented. Good luck in procuring premises in honour of all this"*

*"Wow!!! Thanks for the memories – what a journey"*

*"Great effort guys – wonderful exhibition, well done" Visitor from Melbourne*

*"Extremely interesting. I learnt about Fat Cat but I never saw him because I was born in 1999" Young visitor from South Australia*

*"I really liked that thing where you wind it" - apprentice Mutoscope operator.*