

Media Release: Opera Australia Education Program
For immediate release: 1 May 2009

WotOpera education initiative expands to Queensland

*"It has been one of the best experiences in my life."
WotOpera 2008 participant, Year 9 Narara Valley High*

Adrian Collette, Chief Executive of Opera Australia and **Graeme Wood**, founder of Australasia's leading accommodation website Wotif.com, today announced that **nine new schools**, four in Western Sydney and five in Rockhampton Queensland, will participate in Opera Australia's newest education program, WotOpera.

"**WotOpera** aims to tap into the creativity and ingenuity of young adults through the medium of opera. Twenty students from each school will have the opportunity to produce an original opera and be involved in all aspects of its creation," said Adrian Collette.

"With the help of theatre professionals they will invent the plot, develop the characters, write the libretto and compose the music. They will cast it, direct it, and perform it. They will even paint the set. Finally, they will perform their original work in a fully-equipped professional theatre."

The four **Western Sydney schools** are Campbelltown Performing Arts High, Holroyd High, Airds High and Newington College. In **Queensland schools** participating include Capricornia School of Distance Education, Emmaus College, Glenmore State High School, Mount Morgan State High School and North Rockhampton State High School. One hundred and eighty students will participate in workshops over four to six weeks culminating in a performance of their show to their school community and a public performance in a local theatre.

Rockhampton WotOpera workshops commence on 11 May 2009 and Western Sydney WotOpera workshops commence in August 2009. During the workshop period, students from all nine schools will document their experiences via digital video and photography. Their mini-documentaries will become part of the WotOpera public performances at the **Pilbeam Theatre** in Rockhampton on **5 June 2009**, and the **Parramatta Riverside Theatres** in Sydney on **23 September 2009**.

WotOpera is made possible by the generosity of **Graeme Wood**, founder of Wotif.com and Suncorp 2008 Queenslanders of the Year. The Capricornia School of Distance Education is also being supported by the Queensland Department of Education and Training as part of the Year of Creativity, Connellan Airways Trust and the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia.

WotOpera aims to stimulate and promote students' learning while raising awareness and engagement with the art form of opera. "When we set up the pilot program of WotOpera in Sydney last year, we were confident that students would find it inspiring," said Graeme Wood. "What we weren't expecting was how inspired we would be by their response. The students all reacted to our challenge with creativity, ingenuity, leadership, great talent and boundless enthusiasm.

"I am thrilled to see the WotOpera program expand in 2009, and I can't wait to see what the students come up with."

Further information:

Emma Williams, National Publicist
Phone: 02 9318 8327
Mobile: 0413 985 291
Email: emma.williams@opera-australia.org.au

Milou de Castellane, Assistant Publicist
Phone: 03 9685 3705
Mobile: 0413 460 525
Email: milou@opera-australia.org.au