

## WA

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**T**he spirit of innovation glows nowhere more brightly than within the Belmont Forum shopping complex, halfway between Perth and its airport. Site of the Belmont-associated innovation festival, the complex's new designedge shop at present shows the work of some 30 fabric and garment designers, all good, some brilliant. At the present time, all unknown. The shop manager, Carol Hanlon, is at confident that at least one garment and very likely more of those clothes are so good as to be displayable in museums 100 years from now. There's probably going to be at least one book about the designedge phenomenon in the next half-century. There might well be several.

Carol Hanlon, longtime manager of the Belmont Business Entry Centre, is a former successful designer herself, and now encourages and supports young designers from all over Australia. She takes weeks off from her Belmont office each year to go Outback to teach the elements of the design business to young female designers, many of them indigenous, who know how to create beauty but not much – often, not anything – about how to commercialise their creations.

Some of Australia's best designers, she says, are young indigenous women. So she travels by 4WD over tough dirt roads to help them develop markets for their talent. Many of her teaching sites are one step up from shearing sheds. Things aren't always that tough. She recently took nine of her young designers to a trade show in Hong Kong. Later this year she's to take a larger group to Singapore.

"The world is hungry for designers with stories to tell," she says, "and some of my independent unknowns need only manufacturing opportunities to supply their designs to the best stores in the world. I see a future in which our local designers' work will be sold worldwide in partnership with Asian manufacturers."

There's no profit in this for Carol Hanlon, who describes herself as a business counsellor with a bias toward right-brain, creative people. Like her. She now manages the local Business Entry Centre and has established a separate Textile Clothing Footwear Resource Centre of Western Australia – also a not-for-profit activity, and this one also serves lots of right-brain people: think of smart fabrics, she says, that change like leaves. Her designers are already working with these and other marvels.

Fourteen designedge activities are listed on the AIF program pages in this magazine. Creative people all over Australia are looking for somebody like Carol. And 6000 of them, from coast to coast, are already in her little black book and often, her email inbox.

Innovation is embedded richly throughout Western Australia. WA's regional approach to the innovation festival is more widespread than those of most other states, and brief notes explaining what the individual WA festival components are designed for, run to nearly 50 pages of single-spaced typing.

Among other events in this year's festival:

■ At Bentley Technology Park function centre on the morning of May 4, the Applied Innovation Centre will present and explain what's described as the first research-based business framework designed to help organisations make innovation happen.

■ The UWA graduate school of management on May 3 will see the launch of an innovation excellence program designed to offer continuing, but not full-time education, to entrepreneurs commercialising new ventures. The course will include monthly workshops addressed by industry executives, online information and learning materials, and the deployment of mentors with practical experience relevant to each participant's need.

■ For a unique look at how technology is changing our existence, the Biennale of Electronic Arts, Perth (BEAP) at Bentley presents a gallery of works by leading young electronic artists.

*Complete details of Innovation Festival events are in the program guide from page 45.*

