

## Bluey and Curley Conduct the Children's Choir 2002

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BORDERPANIC offers an opportunity to survey dominant international attitudes to immigration and national borders. Project research has particularly highlighted the many ways in which people sublimate pent-up emotion into creative endeavour.

It became clear to me as I gained more information, that the treatment of and attitudes towards refugees are changing – for the better. A recent poll revealed that 82% of ACT residents are against mandatory detention, which clearly shows that government policy is no longer representative of people's wishes.

Australians in all walks of life are aghast at the terrible ease with which action and inaction in the 20th century has made hordes of helpless refugees of fellow humans. This is the result of religious persecution, political trouble and environmental change.

These refugees, who would be contributing materially and intellectually towards the well being of the world, are forced to exist in limbo and draw upon the resources of others. Limbo is the grave of talents and ambitions.

The BORDERPANIC project was made possible by the combined strivings and efforts of the entire team. It gives me great pleasure, as I am sure it gave to many others, to have been a participant.

Many people have joined this enterprise at the last minute to support it or just to chant “keep going!”. To them we offer great thanks because the last few meters often seem the most insurmountable.

**It has been a great honour to work on BORDERPANIC. Very many people have sustained it and us, and the sheer pleasure and velocity of working as co-curators, as two yoked brains, has been crucial to its appearance, at last, in the world.**

The process of imagining and manifesting BORDERPANIC has been inspiring, absorbing, heartbreaking, exhausting, and also fun. We have been blessed over and over by the extraordinary generosity of administrators, artists, publicists, writers, educators, nerds, activists, and people who can do maths.

I wish there were an underlying, architectural schema to BORDERPANIC that I could now explain to our mutual satisfaction. I want to say, I'm an artist, don't blame me. But I'm fully implicated, as are you.

BORDERPANIC is not enough, it's not a solution, or even a proposal.

ALL THE WORK REMAINS TO BE DONE OUTSIDE THIS ROOM.<sup>1</sup>

Every day I walk here on land cleared of its people for, eventually, me. I'm subject to leaders who incarcerate fleeing people in my name. It's overwhelming. The point is, it's worth starting somewhere.

The crystallising moment of this project for me has been meeting two of the artists exhibiting in BORDERPANIC: the gracious Al Abaddys, formerly of Baghdad, currently of Villawood Detention Centre. It can't be that visiting detained people improves their situation, ameliorates the impossible ugliness of detention, or even soothes my own shame. (after all, I get to go home after) But these individual hours of encounter has brought me to the heart of this project. We are in a state of officially sanctioned border panic. All the first, or white, worlds are becoming fortresses, convulsed with fear, anger and hatred of real and imagined others. This is us, here and now. How are we to participate in this history we are standing in?

We hope BORDERPANIC is a lightning rod.