



the **ARCHIBULL** PRIZE



THE ARCHIBULL PRIZE 2017 TEACHER INTERVIEW KHANTHAMALA GIFFORD - BLACKTOWN GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

THIRTY YEAR 9 VISUAL ARTS AND YEAR 10 FOOD TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS FROM BLACKTOWN GIRLS HIGH EMBARKED UPON THEIR FIRST ARCHIBULL PRIZE THIS YEAR, STUDYING THE COTTON INDUSTRY. ART TEACHER KHANTHAMALA GIFFORD SHARES SOME OF THEIR HIGHLIGHTS.

WHY SHOULD AN URBAN SCHOOL GET INVOLVED WITH THE ARCHIBULL?

In an urban environment we don't think about the agriculture industry at all unless it is forced upon us. The kids, parents and even teachers have no exposure to agriculture so it's crucial that The Archibull Prize targets urban schools. We need to educate our youth to make sure the industry survives. The kids are our future and they have the power to make the difference, so we need to educate them now.

WHAT SUPPORT DID YOU RECEIVE FROM THE COTTON INDUSTRY?

We received a box of goodies from Cotton Australia that contained information and statistics about the cotton industry. This education pack was fantastic and was what we used to base our artwork on.

HOW IMPORTANT WAS THE VISIT FROM YOUR YOUNG FARMING CHAMPION?

Casey Onus was very supportive and down to earth. The fact she is a young ambitious woman made the girls feel comfortable and they asked lots of questions. They got an insight into agricultural careers and the fact you don't need to be working on a farm wearing overalls. Casey's career gives her opportunities to travel and make a difference in the agricultural industry, which became the impetus for us to focus on career opportunities for our animation.

DID YOU ENGAGE WITH THE WIDER COMMUNITY?

We spoke to our local MP Michelle Rowland and through her became involved with the charity Share the Dignity, which collects sanitary items for homeless women and women fleeing domestic violence. We got involved with this charity because sanitary items are made from cotton. It was an eye-opener for the students when told some girls their age go without sanitary items. Cotton is not just wearing a shirt or wearing a pair of jeans, it is used for our daily needs.

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE LOWS AND HIGHS OF PARTICIPATING IN THE ARCHIBULL PRIZE?

It is bigger than Ben Hur, and because I also had HSC artworks due at the same time I struggled with time management. I would have liked more time to prepare. The girls were initially hesitant about the project: the food technology students wanted to cook, not paint and the art students wanted to paint and not research, but one of the highlights was seeing them overcome these issues and pull through, often after school or in school holidays, and at the end they were really proud of themselves. The other highlight was having that community connection through Michelle Rowland and Casey Onus.

CAN YOU TELL ME TWO THINGS YOU HAVE LEARNT ABOUT THE COTTON INDUSTRY THAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW BEFORE THE ARCHIBULL PRIZE?

What stood out for all of us were the career opportunities available in the industry – for example we had never given any thought to what an agronomist was. The other highlight was the impact cotton has on the community. I kept asking the girls "What would we do if we didn't have the cotton industry?"