

## Director's Comments

by Director/Producer Celia Tait

***Return to Eden*** is a unique story set in the hot and remote wilderness of Western Australia. A tale of human endeavour in the face of many obstacles determined to right the wrongs of past mistakes. It traces an historic chapter in cutting edge ecological science and environmental management by following the progress of Project Eden, a Western Australian Conservation and Land Management initiative. Never before in Australia has there been such a large scale attempt to rid an area of feral animals and re-instate native species. The film tells the story of past and present human intervention. It poses fundamental questions about the way we manage our environment and the resources required to do so. As such, the story of Project Eden provides us a microcosm. It details issues facing the rest of the continent.

My aim was to tell a story of epic proportions but keep it focused with an intimate heart. The key to this was to find characters (human and animal) connected to Project Eden in different ways. Retired nurse June Butcher, through her voluntary work at Kanyana Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre provides the emotional heart to the story as we follow her personal journey of bilbies being born and bred and finally released into the wild. Separate from the official scientific community, June's work is community based – an essential ingredient to the overall objectives of state-wide conservation work. Through her we are given a unique insight into a marsupial little known to most Australians. At last the story of the bilby is told.

Government workers officially connected to Project Eden, provide a different vantage point. Peter Speldewinde, the technical officer responsible for re-locating and releasing native animals offers a more pragmatic approach to the trials and tribulations of this experimental work. Mark Britza is equally practical in his approach to feral cat eradication.

### FILMING

The film is shot on Super 16 widescreen to maximise the epic landscape of the Peron peninsular.

At the other end of the technical spectrum infra red security cameras were used to film bilbies in pitch darkness inside their breeding boxes. This allowed the bilbies to carry on life as normal in total oblivion to 'big brother' watching them. For the crew and members of Kanyana Wildlife Centre, it allowed unprecedented access to the previously secret world of the bilby. Key events in the bilby life-cycle were observed and filmed for the first time – without intrusively changing conditions for the animals.



The feral cats were notoriously difficult to film and there were many exasperated moments waiting for them to mate and predate. Peron feral cats were brought down to an enclosure at CALM's Woodvale Research Centre and filmed on remote infrared cameras.