

The Australian  
Interview with Richard Bell  
12 January 2012

Available from: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/arts/flashbacks-from-the-edge/story-e6frg8n6-1226242136871>

The screenshot shows the Australian newspaper's website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'THE AUSTRALIAN' logo and various menu items. Below that, there's a section for 'ARTS, LIT & STYLE' with a 'PICASSO ON NOW SYDNEY ONLY' banner. The main article is titled 'Flashbacks from the edge' and features a photo of Richard Bell. The article text discusses his views on Aboriginal land rights and a 1982 protest in Brisbane's Musgrave Park. There are also social media sharing options and a 'Sponsored Links' section on the right.

Text:

By Sallie Don

**RICHARD Bell sighs as he views footage of himself as a young man agitating for Aboriginal land rights. The state of Queensland, he says, is not what it used to be. "Strange as it would seem, things were better for us under the Bjelke-Petersen government than they are under the Peter Beattie and Anna Bligh government."**

**Bell is watching a documentary about a 1982 protest in Brisbane's Musgrave Park, which hundreds of Aborigines occupied during the Commonwealth Games.**

**The 60-minute documentary We Fight depicts what Bell describes as a peaceful protest. The footage, forgotten about until recently, has not been viewed by the**

public for 30 years and will be part of Bell's show at the Campbelltown Arts Centre this Saturday as part of the Sydney Festival's Edge of Elsewhere exhibition.

The film, produced by Madeline McGrady, will be projected on to a floor-to-ceiling screen surrounded by newspaper headlines, clippings published at the time of the protest.

Bell was surprised to see in the documentary footage of a young policeman named Wayne Bennett, now one of Australia's most revered rugby league coaches. He is seen escorting Lionel Rose, the first indigenous boxer to win a world title, out of Musgrave Park.

"It was all really civilised, though," Bell says. "He grabbed a hold of Lionel's arm and just walked him out peacefully."

Bell, now 59, thinks protests have become more violent since then and that Australians have experienced a "quantum shift" in their attitudes towards indigenous people.

"Now people are nowhere near as understanding or accommodating," he said.

"Look at the alcohol management in Queensland and the Northern Territory intervention. Our lives have become harder to live and are incredibly scrutinised now."

Bell won the 2003 Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award with his piece *Scientia e Metaphysica* (Bell's Theorem), which had "Aboriginal Art -- It's A White Thing" written across it.

When he accepted his award he was wearing a T-shirt inscribed with the words "White girls can't hump".

But Bell does not see himself as particularly controversial, and nor does he describe himself as an Aboriginal artist. "I'm commentating from the sidelines as a contemporary artist," he said. "We urban blacks are not allowed to paint Aboriginal art with dots and cross-hatching. We're not seen as authentic."

## Central Magazine Listing



**TWO  
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### CINEMA ALLEY

A one-night-only outdoor presentation of video works from Australia and China across two screens curated by Gallery 44. **WHERE:** Parker St City. **WHEN:** February 3. **INFO:** [44.com.au](http://44.com.au)

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### EDGE OF ELSEWHERE

The best leading international and Australian artists have created a twinning partnership with Sydney's diverse cultural communities. **WHERE:** Gallery 44 Haymarket. **WHEN:** 11 till March 18. **INFO:** [44.com.au](http://44.com.au)