

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person  
**Entry ID:** AWE1160

## Moffatt, Tracey

(1960 - )

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**Nationality** Australian

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**Born** 12 November, 1960, Brisbane Queensland Australia

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**Occupation** Actor, Artist, Director, Filmmaker, Photographer, Producer, Scriptwriter

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### Summary

Tracey Moffatt is an internationally renowned Aboriginal photographer, documentary maker and director. Moffatt's photography is reflected in her films and documentaries, which explore Aboriginal culture by confronting commonly held stereotypes.

Tracey Moffatt was born in 1960 in Brisbane, where she graduated from the Queensland College of Arts. Her debut film, *Nice Coloured Girls*, won the Most Innovative Film award at the 1988 Festival of Australian Film and Video. At the same festival, she won the Best New Australian Video award for her 5-minute Aboriginal and Islander dance video, *Watch Out*. Moffatt also produced *Moodeitj Yorgas*, which includes interviews, dances, and storytelling by Western Australian Aboriginal women. Her film *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy* (1990) draws from the 1955 Chauvel film *Jedda*.

Moffatt's photographic exhibitions include "Some Lads" and "Something More".

### Details

Moffatt released her first documentary in 1988. *A Change of Face* critically examined the popular understanding and construction of Australian identity in films, television drama and advertisements.

Moffatt's first documentary focused solely on Aboriginal culture is *Moodeitj Yorgas* (Solid Women). Released in 1989, the film focused on strong and successful Aboriginal women. The film is constructed through the use of interviews, photographs of Aboriginal people and their land, stories about how the arrival of white man changed Aboriginal life (told in two Aboriginal languages), and Aboriginal music and dance. The interviews with Sally Morgan, Lois Olney, Helen Corbett and Helen Dorondorf are symbolic of the collective voice of Aboriginal women.

Her next documentary was *Nice Coloured Girls* (1989). Moffatt again juxtaposed photography with voiceovers to examine the historical relationship between Aboriginal women and white men. The documentary questioned the validity of conventional white history that depicts Aborigines as passive and powerless.

Also in 1989, she wrote and directed *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy*. *Night Cries* was inspired by Charles Chauvel's *Jedda* (1955), and continued the story of the two main characters, thirty years after *Jedda*. In the film, the relationship has changed from mother and child to carer and invalid.

Moffatt's first feature film *Bedevil* was a set of three individual ghost stories that interlock to form one cohesive movie. The film was released in 1993 and is the second feature film to be directed by an indigenous Australian.

### Events

#### 2001 - 2001

Inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women

## Published resources

### **Edited Book**

The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia : Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, society and culture, Horton, David, 1994

The Oxford Companion to Australian Film, McFarlane, Brian, Mayer Geoff and Bertrand, Ina, 1999

Womenvision: Women and the Moving Image in Australia, French, Lisa, 2003

### **Resource**

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

### **Book**

Murawina : Australian women of high achievement, Roberta Sykes ; photography by Sandy Edwards, 1993

The moving images of Tracey Moffatt, Summerhayes, Catherine, 2007

### **Site Exhibition**

The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia, Smart, Judith and Swain, Shurlee (eds.), 2014,

<http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders>

## Archival resources

### **National Film and Sound Archive**

[Women 88](#)

[Boomalli: Five Koori Artists](#)

[Moodeitj Yorgas](#)

[Nice Coloured Girls](#)

[Night Cries : A Rural Tragedy](#)

[Bedevil : Original Release](#)

[A Change of Face](#)

[\[A Positive Identity for Black Film Makers : Sydney Film Festival : Film Forum\]](#)

[\[Moffatt, Tracey : Interviewed by Kari Hanet : Oral History\]](#)

[\[Moffatt, Tracey : upper body shot, head turned to right, corrugated iron roof in background\]](#)

### **National Library of Australia**

[\[Biographical cuttings on Tracey Moffatt, film-maker, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals\]](#)

### **Author Details**

Hollie Aerts, Leonarda Kovacic and Barbara Lemon

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