

# Final Report

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## The Deadly Awards Nomination and Voting System Review and Research Project

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To



by



**Australian Council *for* Educational Research**

April 2011

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## 1. Executive summary

In early 2011, ACER conducted a review of the Deadly Awards' nomination and voting system, on behalf of Vibe Australia. As part of this review, ACER has examined over 20 national and international awards and conducted telephone interviews with nine people who have sound knowledge of the Deadly Awards.

On the basis of this review, ACER suggests that Vibe Australia consider the following:

- Revisiting and, if necessary, refining or defining the purpose of the Deadly Awards
- Ensuring this purpose is reflected closely in each award category
- Reducing and consolidating the number of award categories
- Using a voting system that combines popular vote and expert judges
- Publishing the nomination criteria
- Developing general and category-specific criteria for judging and publishing these criteria well in advance of the judging
- Changing the format of the awards ceremony at the Opera House to include live interaction with several communities
- Conducting a short training exercise for panel members in relation to assessing the criteria
- Establishing a weighting system for each criterion
- Giving shortlisted unsuccessful nominees constructive feedback.

These are suggestions only and the rationale for each is explained in this review.

## 2. Introduction

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) was commissioned in late 2010 by Vibe Australia to investigate the current nomination and voting system for the Deadly Awards and identify ways in which the current system could be strengthened.

The Deadlys are in their 17<sup>th</sup> year. Beginning as a music award, the categories have expanded over the years to include sport, the arts, community awards and nominations for the Hall of Fame. Given their longevity and the debate that ensued after last year's awards,<sup>1</sup> it is timely to review the current nomination and voting system.

The Deadly Awards are intended to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's outstanding achievements. They enjoy a high profile and considerable prestige.

### Current system

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<sup>1</sup> See letters in the *Koori Mail*, 6 October 2010; 20 October 2010; 3 November 2010.

The current nomination and voting system for the Deadlys is mainly by popular vote. Deadly Academy members, who are past winners, are invited to vote on the community award categories. Members of the public are also able to vote in the community award categories. While voting information and forms are targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, non-Indigenous Australians can also vote. Voting can be done via post, fax and online. A vote can be made on the voting form in *Deadly Vibe* magazine and via the Vibe website.

Nominations are called for by Vibe Australia each year, against 28 award categories. These are currently grouped around the broad categories of music, sport, the arts and community awards.

Communities nominate people in all award categories and the top four nominees in each category after the popular vote is finalised, become the final nominees.

Nominations in the community award categories are against particular criteria. In 2010, the community awards included:

- Outstanding Achievement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education
- Outstanding achievement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health
- Health Worker of the Year
- Outstanding achievement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment
- Outstanding Achievement in Cultural Advancement
- Community Broadcaster of the Year
- Leader of the Year

Once the top four nominations in each award category are finalised, these nominees are put back out to the community for popular vote. The Deadly Academy is asked to vote specifically in the community award categories, but can also vote in other Deadly categories.

Vibe promotes voting through the website, *Koori Mail*, *Deadly Vibe* magazine, on radio advertisements produced and broadcast on Deadly Sounds, through monthly e-vibe newsletters and at the Vibe 3on3.

### **Reason for review**

The Deadly Awards have been steadily expanding over the years. In 2010, several issues were raised by readers of the *Koori Mail*, including the need to 'revamp' the current nomination and voting system. In particular, it was suggested that the current system needed to be more transparent, equitable and accessible to all Aboriginal people regardless of location. Several interviewees commented on the rapid growth of the awards, and there was an understanding that this can make processes difficult. One interviewee suggested: 'It is timely for it to have a review. There has been a very strong and rapid growth ... in these situations processes can go out the window.' The point was made that as the event becomes more popular, people become more critical. It appears from the interviewees' comments, though, that such criticism is aimed at enhancing the awards not undermining them. The purpose of this review is to identify how the Deadlys nomination and voting system could be made more effective.