



2007 BYRON BAY WRITERS FESTIVAL

Festival Writer: **Melissa Lucashenko**

Melissa Lucashenko is a Brisbane-born Murri woman who lives on Bundjalung land with her partner and two children. Melissa began working life in the early Eighties as a barmaid, housepainter and martial arts instructor (she has a black belt in karate and was four times Queensland karate champion). Higher things soon beckoned, and Melissa achieved an Honours degree in public policy from Griffith University in 1988. She worked for a time in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, as well as in Indigenous Health.



While attempting a Phd in the early Nineties, Melissa decided that anything had to be easier, and instead wrote her first novel, *Steam Pigs*. Published by University of Queensland Press in 1997 (while Melissa was living in the Kingdom of Tonga) *Steam Pigs* won or was shortlisted for several major Australian literary awards, including the Nita B. Kibble award for women's writing.

Her second novel, *Killing Darcy*, won the Aurora Prize for teenage literature, while *Hard Yards* was shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Award as well as the Courier Mail Book of the Year. *Too Flash* – a novel for teenage girls - was published by Tjukurpa Books in 2002.

Melissa has spoken at major literary festivals in Australia and around the world. She is passionate about seeing Australia mature into a country where Indigenous rights are not only achieved, but where Indigenous culture is embraced by the wider population as part of their birthright also. She lives in the country just south of Brisbane, where she breeds Arabian horses and is working on a play about Aboriginal Law in contemporary life.

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the festival for thinkers