



The Ultimate Homemaker Centre

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INK LINES Dr Mair Underwood delves into the world of body art

colour me bad

It's a club for one in 10 but membership is booming. More than 10 per cent of Aussies now sport tattoos – and they're not conforming to the age-old stereotypes ...

TARRAGINDI anthropologist Dr Mair Underwood is keen to break down misconceptions about those who ink, with a documentary about the pain, passion and stigma of body art.

"Gone are the days of walking in drunk, picking a picture off the wall and saying 'chuck that on my arm'," says Mair, who has six tattoos herself.

"There are not too many pictures on walls now. It's all about having something custom designed for the individual, either by the tattooist or yourself.

"Tattooing is being seen as a form of art rather than a barbaric and primitive practice which the lower-class deform their bodies with."

Despite a "cultural upgrade", Mair says the stigma remains.

"It's still a bit too early to say tattoos are socially acceptable in everyone's eyes," she says.

"A lot of people still look at a tattooed person as being a bit deviant or dangerous."

Queensland Orchestra marketing coordinator Tamara Grigg wears her four tattoos with pride, claiming her only regret is that she didn't make her first one, at 18, bigger.

"I wish I hadn't been so cautious (and) had got it bigger at the size the tattooist recommended," Tamara says.

Working for an organisation that is traditionally considered conservative, Tamara admits her body art shocked some people.

"I catch the odd raised eyebrow or expression of shocked glee every now and then," she admits.

"These days it's more 'oh gosh aren't you kooky/ brave' rather than 'oh my god, we have a menace to society in the building'.

"I've spied quite a few (tattoos) on the musicians. It's hard to spot them on the fellas as they are dinner-suited on most occasions, but amongst the girls there is plenty of discreet ink."

Mair says the documentary will also look at the changing styles of tattoos through the decades.

"There has been shift from when I got my tattoos, in the 1990s, to what is popular in the noughties," she says.

"They were big, bold tribal and celtic designs. Now it's gone back to what we call 'old school' designs of anchors, hearts with daggers and bluebirds, things that were popular 50 or 100 years ago."

The permanency of tattoos, and the associated regret, is another aspect she hopes to explore.

To take part in the documentary, email m_underwood@optusnet.com.au 

