

# NAISDA helps Kelly

**N**AISDA 2012 graduate Thomas E S Kelly has credited NAISDA Dance

College with giving him the opportunity to become an artist on a professional level. However, he makes it clear that dancers need to work hard and persevere. Natural ability and talent, he says, will only get you so far. Dancers give years of their lives plus their sweat, tears and sometimes blood to have the honour and pleasure of performing on stage.

Studying at NAISDA Dance College and then transitioning into the world of dance and performing arts only happens through hard work and passion. NAISDA, Kelly says, gives people the tools, then it's up to them.

Kelly is an independent artist of the Bundjalung and Wiradjuri (both NSW) nations. Since graduating in 2012, he generates his own choreography while performing for and with some high-profile artists in the industry.

His recent performances include *Long Grass*, which was choreographed by NAISDA graduate Vicki Van Hout and premiered at Sydney Festival. This contemporary Indigenous dance piece tackled complex issues around Aboriginal people living in 'long grass' in Darwin. Long grass is the term for Aboriginal people perceived as being homeless and on the fringes, yet living in the middle of the city.

Recently, Kelly also performed in *Am I* with Shaun Parker at the Georgetown Festival in Malaysia.

Kelly was the 2014 Australian representative at the Indigenous Dance Residency at the Banff Centre, Canada. He



Thomas E S Kelly.  
Image from his Facebook page

was also the 2014 Jump mentor recipient, an Australia Council grant program that supports emerging artists to work towards a professional career. He used the \$10,000

grant to develop and practice dance while studying at NIDA. Kelly then created a solo performance, *Jarrah's Old Uncle*. Kelly has been the music composition,

tour manager and performer for NAISDA and Musica Viva's *Datwuy Dreaming*, and he spent two months in Europe creating development opportunities and participating in workshops with Hofesah Shecter, Ultima Vez and Rosas.

He is now creating a first major dance theatre work for next year's Ware Festival in Melbourne, which will preview in May 2016. He will also be part of NAISDA's 40th anniversary celebrations in 2016.

Further to this, Kelly is venturing into other areas of the creative world – acting, spoken word, music, composition and filming – and would eventually like to own his own dance company.

Performing arts and dance has also given Kelly the opportunity to share his cultural knowledge on a national and international stage.

NAISDA is proud of Kelly and his achievements, and continues to have a strong professional and personal relationship with him.

● If you think you have what it takes to dance all over the world, or you would like to have an amazing career like Thomas E S Kelly, come to the NAISDA studios on the Central Coast of NSW for the auditions from November 30 to December 4 for those seeking to start study in 2016. Audition applications close on October 9.

Abstudy travel and accommodation costs are available for eligible participants.

For more information, download the NAISDA Audition Pack at [www.naisda.com.au](http://www.naisda.com.au) or phone 1800 117 116.

– by Sherree Foley