Ms Louise Denson
Head of Jazz

There are several things that really excite me about the jazz program at the Queensland Conservatorium. I think the main one would be that we put a great emphasis on encouraging the creativity of our students. Jazz is a music which very much values the individuality of a musician's voice and so while there is a common language at the core of jazz based improvisation, all the great players in jazz are those who have gone beyond that and found something personal, something within themselves to offer within the context of the music. So all the staff in the jazz area really value that and hopefully we model that as well for the students in that we are all jazz musicians, but we have very particular styles and very particular interests.

Particularly in Australia, jazz is no longer a music that looks exclusively to America for its reference points. And there are many very interesting musical influences and streams in America, in Australian improvised music, so among our staff we have people who are interested in South Indian music, North Indian music, Afro Cuban music, Brazilian music, also Klezmer music and also popular music off-shoots like Found Confusion and so on.

So students who find that perhaps their principle passion isn’t bebop and hard bop, have got people who they can study with, where they can develop their own interests and get some expert coaching along those lines as well.

Another thing that I find very exciting is that we are lucky enough to have quite a regular series of visiting artists in the area and so we have had quite a number of very prominent Australian musicians come to do master classes and workshops with the students, including the Sandy Evans Trio, Julien Wilson Trio, Joe Chindamo Trio, Band of Five Names and so on. We also have the occasional international star. For example, a workshop which is still talked about a few years after the fact is when Lionel Loueke came to do a workshop for the students when he was here visiting with Herbie Hancock.

So I think all these things work together to create a really stimulating and inspiring and creative kind of environment for the students.