



Premieres on Tuesday March 11 at 8pm.

**Live online forum tonight, March 18, right here after the show at 8:30pm**  
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From the cradle to the grave, *Stuff* examines the abiding passion all of us have for stuff – the stuff we buy, the stuff we treasure, the stuff we desire and the stuff that's most important to us.

Wendy Harmer – a pioneer of Australian comedy, and world-class accumulator –presents this four-part series that takes us from a baby shower to a retirement home; from a school yard to a prison. She asks everyone she meets: Why do you love your stuff so much? What does it mean to you? What's the best stuff of all?

Present-day Australian society is one of the most asset-rich in human history. The modern mantra is that we now have "too much stuff" and that "stuff doesn't make us happy", and yet we all have objects which are precious to us. Objects can hold memories, inspire through the ages and, when offered as gifts,

bind us to one another. Yet all too often the piles of "stuff" we own seem beyond our control.

Although the topic of consumerism has been theorised and written about for many years, recent concerns about mass-production, globalisation, global warming and resource shortage, have made us all concerned with "over-consumption". We now understand that our love for stuff could cost us the earth.

But how can we begin to give up our desire for stuff, unless we understand why we have it in the first place?

*Stuff* asks: Are we hard-wired to accumulate? At what age do we begin to identify stuff as our own? Why do we choose the stuff we do? How do we express our unique personalities through our stuff? And how does our attitude to stuff change on life's cluttered journey? The answers Wendy is given tell us that our relationship with our stuff is much more complex than we might realise...And that our conversations about over-consumption have only just begun.

Created and Written by Wendy Harmer. Producers - Laura Waters and Wendy Harmer. Series Producer, Georgie McClements. Director, Ted Emery. Princess Pictures Production for ABC TV. ABC TV Executive Producer, Dasha Ross. Princess Pictures Executive Producer, Laura Waters.

**Our *Stuff* Episode 1, Tuesday March 11 at 8pm**

Can a "chucker" and a "hoarder" ever live happily together? What happens when our love of stuff gets in the way of love and stuff? What's it like to have your stuff taken from you? Wendy talks to prisoners, students, backpackers, newlyweds, chuckers and hoarders about their stuff – what it means to them, why they have it and why they can't live without it.

**My *Stuff* Episode 2, Tuesday March 18 at 8pm**

This week Wendy spends time at a baby shower and visits pre-schools, shopping centres, teenagers' bedrooms and boarding schools to try to find the answer to the question: Are we hard-wired to accumulate stuff? Or is it something we learn?

**Their *Stuff* Episode 3, Tuesday March 25 at 8pm**

The stuff that goes with family life is always a challenge. Wendy talks to the generations about how they negotiate Christmas, clutter and collecting. She also investigates what it's like for a family to lose stuff through divorce or natural disaster.

**Stuffed Episode 4, Tuesday April 1 at 8pm**

When we grow old and realise that we can't take our stuff with us, is that when we truly understand its value? This week we finish the story of stuff as Wendy talks with retirees, 'Grey Nomads', monks and priests and looks at the stuff we can carry through the eye of a needle.

**Wendy Harmer's personal statement –**

In making this series I wanted to present a view about consumption that was beyond basic academic theory. I wanted to present a human view of consumption.

I found myself increasingly dissatisfied with the many books, newspaper columns and documentaries that finger-wag about the way we consume. We consume, they say, because we're "greedy", "unthinking", to "show off" to "have power over others".

We are told that consuming is a habit we have to quickly unlearn, as if, somehow, we had only recently learned it. In fact, we humans have been consuming forever. The desire to acquire goods is as much a part of our lives as is the desire to work.

In researching this topic, I was much inspired by a wonderful book: "The World of Goods – Towards an Anthropology of Consumption" written by Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood (Basic books New York, 1979).

In this book, the authors make the point that consumption cannot be discussed without looking at our social system. In fact, we humans consume for many different reasons – to keep ourselves warm and fed, certainly, but we also consume books, poetry and beautiful objects that inspire; we use goods to celebrate; as gifts; to honour our spiritual life; to express our identity and encode memory.

Therefore, stuff is both the hardware and the software of human existence.

I am very proud to have made a documentary about consumption that does not contain the usual footage of factory smokestacks, landfill tips and bulging supermarket trolleys.

Instead, it features many happy human faces and all their wonderful stuff! It's a study of a love affair as much as anything else. The message of this programme is to be mindful when you consume and above all, love your stuff. It is as unique as you are. Hopefully, this series will have people thinking about over-consumption, but in a gentle and humorous way.

I believe that we do have to curb our desire for material goods, but that this must be in partnership with the way we make things. It's not that we shouldn't have stuff – but that our stuff should be sustainable. It should be made, purchased and owned with care and a conscience.

If *Stuff* does make people pause before they buy their 300th pair of earrings or that new gadget, that's a bonus!

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**Wendy Harmer biography**

Wendy Harmer is one of Australia's best-known humorists, authors and broadcasters. She began her career as a political journalist and has written for a number of newspapers and magazines.

Wendy is the author of six books for adults, she has written two plays, and she also wrote the libretto for Baz Lurhmann's Opera Australia production of *Lake Lost*.

Wendy's children's book series about Pearlle the Park Fairy has sold more than 350,000 copies in Australia and internationally since the first *Pearlle In The Park* was published in 2003. The subsequent books in the series were instant best-sellers. A 52-part television series is now in production and will be screened in Australia in 2009. Wendy is assisting in writing and developing the series and will act as Creative Producer.

Wendy was the host of the ABC TV series *The Big Gig*, co-starred in the critically-acclaimed *World Series Debates* (ABC TV) with Andrew Denton in 1993/94, and in 1990 hosted her own late night chat show *In Harmer's Way*. Wendy hosted the Logie Awards in 2002.

Wendy began her radio career on ABC's Radio National with her own drive programme, *Kaboom!* In 1993 she joined 2Day FM to lead the Breakfast Show team. During the 11 years she hosted the program it rated number one in 84 out of 88 surveys.

Wendy is married to Brendan, a committed environmentalist, surfer and house-husband, and has two children, Marley and Maeve. She still finds time to be involved with the Manly Football Club and takes her regular turn at the school luck shop.

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