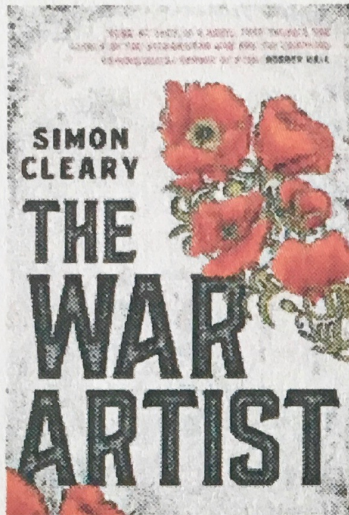


BATTLES REACH FAR BEYOND THE FRONTLINE

THE WAR ARTIST SIMON CLEARY

UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND PRESS, RRP \$30



Simon Cleary's powerful saga scrutinises the enormous effect of war, mentally and physically through Australian Brigadier James Phelan, an armchair officer who has made his operational decisions from the comfort of a desk.

Desperate to get near the front, he wrangles a trip to Afghanistan for what's supposed to be a benign meeting concerning a water crossing. Tragedy strikes when the patrol escorting Phelan is ambushed. Samuel Beckett, a young Aussie soldier, is killed and Lieutenant Anthony Gruen wants revenge. Enter Kira, a tattoo artist, who Phelan meets after he escorts Beckett's casket back to Sydney. Kira has reneged on a fine arts degree to embellish people's bodies and from the moment he steps into the tattoo parlour, their fate is intertwined. This book captures the strength of the human spirit; when life throws everything at you, from every direction. **WENDY MASON**

VERDICT: A WORTHY READ
