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Celebrity hands blueprints for survival of endangered species.

particularly in a recession. She may not have much money left, but her brainchild is well and truly off the ground.

Artists For Life has already spread to America and Hong Kong. Enlisting celebrity help initially required innovation and Ms Davson rose to the creative challenge.

"When 'New Kids on the Block' was in Australia I went to the press conference, as I couldn't contact the band members directly," she said.

"I stood up in front of the media pack and asked them how concerned they were about endangered animals... but I was the only person speaking through a puppet!

"That certainly got their attention and they've been big supporters ever since."

The puppet, dubbed Brian, is an appropriate representative as he is the spittine image

to set up local branches of the charity because it is often third-world environments and species that are most at risk.

"Even in our own backyards we may be damaging the natural ecosystems," Ms Davson said.

"For instance, in my suburb, Cherrybrook, new home blocks are often totally cleared of native plants.

"When people move in they may replace them with different varieties — that destroys the environ-

Neil Diamond, Tom Jones and Linda Evangelista are among the big names getting behind a unique charity.
LIZ BENNETT reports

Clockwise from top: The helping handprints of Linda Evangelista (life-size reproduction), Luke Perry, Tom Barlow and Sir Jack Brabham.

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"To conceive a project like 'Hands Up' and to run an organisation that's in more than one country you have to be very creative!" Ms Davson said.

"Celebrities wanted to be involved and the hand print is the most simple form of art known to man, plus it's unique since no two hands are the same."

"We are raffling them off regularly. Last week Ian Chappell's hand raised \$3,500 for a research weather station to help protect the last 100 Northern hairy nosed wombats in central Queensland."

It was a risky venture and her many critics said it couldn't be done — to start up a major charity through one person's sheer determination —

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But Ms Davson doesn't get to see all that much of her suburb — or her husband, Terry Barker, an air force officer and pilot. Her 14-hour, seven-day-a-week commitment to the charity leaves little time for other interests.

Both agree, however, that the dedication is worth it. Ms Davson views the destruction of three species a day worldwide as evidence that we are not only losing our animals but our cultural heritage.

She intends to return to the easel one day — there is still plenty of demand for her work. But at the moment Ms Davson's priorities lie firmly with endangered animals.

"My philosophy is that if I only had six months to live what would matter more — my art or this work?"

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