

CASE STUDY

BACK TRACK BOYS

TROUBLED BOYS ARE ON A PERILOUS COURSE
TOWARDS JAIL UNTIL THEY MEET A FREEWHEELING JACKAROO AND HIS DOG JUMP TEAM









EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Film synopsis

A group of troubled boys are on a perilous course towards jail until they meet up with the free-wheeling jackaroo, Bernie Shakeshaft, and hit the road with his legendary dog jumping team. This observational documentary follows boys in a youth program BackTrack that Bernie runs from a shed on the outskirts of Armidale, Australia.





Watch online here:











CONTEXT



Rural and regional residents experience higher rates of poverty, housing stress, social isolation, service exclusion and substance abuse. Youth are particularly vulnerable within these communities and have a greater chance of falling through the cracks. Many young people are at risk of dropping out of mainstream education and can get caught up in the juvenile justice system.

<u>A report by the Australian Institute for Health and Welfare</u> states that on an average night in June 2018 there were 980 young people in youth detention in Australia - 90% young men.

Armidale has a significant youth population, with people aged 15-24 making up 20% of the population (vs 12% in NSW) and youth unemployment is 16.6% (vs 12% national average).

In 2020, bush fires and Covid-19 have accelerated critical youth issues - more young people finding themselves even more isolated and restricted access to crucial support services.

980

980 in youth detention on an average night



90%

are young men

"We hope the film will inspire to take a different approach to working with young people at risk of social exclusion, particularly in rural and regional areas."

- Catherine Scott, Director

Social:

Resources:



















REACH







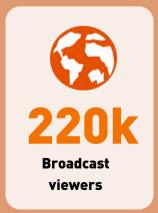




14k+

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Social media













200k

Theatrical Screenings

IMPACT MAP



Reaching audiences across Australia

Backtrack Boys had a comprehensive distribution strategy, supported by the impact strategy, to bring the film to communities across Australia.

Hundreds of screenings were held in cinemas, communities and a range of educational contexts including high schools, colleges, TAFEs and juvenile detention centres.

Screenings were hosted by a range of stakeholders and partners including youth organisations, advocacy group, educators, youth workers and other dedicated individuals wanting to use the film to make a difference.

Together, these screenings raised awareness about youth issues within local communities, educated professionals and colleagues, and inspired others to support youth initiatives and programs in their area.

Legend:









RECEPTION Critic reviews





"This film will move you.
It'll make you cry. Heck,
I've shed a tear or two
just thinking about the
film as I write this
review. Simply put: this
is one of the best
Australian films of the
year."





- Sydney Morning Herald







"This is one of the most moving and important documentaries to be made in Australia for the last 20 years. Or maybe ever. This is profound, extraordinary filmmaking. This is what a camera is made to do. These are the stories we need to hear."

- Tracey Korsten (Glam Adelaide)

"The honesty, passion, determination, commitment, authenticity, and its ultimate love, makes this movie an absolute must for every person in Australia and the world to see."

- All About Entertainment



Links:



TIMELINE O

Backtrack Boys had a three-year-campaign. It was first rolled out to theatrical release by the distributor, before it was then rolled into a non-theatrical release, screening in communities, libraries, churches and schools. As the film built its audience, tools and materials were distributed to aid individuals inspired to host their own screenings, and finally the education campaign was launched in the third year.

10/06/2018

Film premiered at Sydney Film Festival

25/10/2018

National cinema release

2018-2020

360 theatrical and non theatrical screenings across Australia and New Zealand

0149-2020

Hosted screening and outreach programme in rural and regional Australia Zealand

August 2020

ATOM educational toolkit available

ctober 2020

BackTrack Boys Study Guide and Workbook launched

Additional details:

RECEPTION

Festival+Awards

16

Festivals
(in Aus & NZ)







BEST DOCUMENTARY
AT STRONGER THAN FICTION
FILM FESTIVAL



BEST DOCUMENTARY
BYRON BAY FILM FESTIVAL





BEST DOCUMENTARY
AT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL



CINEFEST OZ FILM FESTIVAL 2018 OFFICIAL SELECTION



FILM CRITICS CIRCLE
OF AUSTRALIA BEST FEATURE
DOCUMENTARY



BEST DOCUMENTARY
AT MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL



AUDIO NETWORK AWARD FOR BEST EDITING



SHORT LIST FOR AACTA AWARD FOR BEST DOCUMENTARY

MEDIA+ PUBLICITY



The success of BackTrack Boys has led to national media coverage of the documentary and the youth program, with Bernie Shakeshaft even being invited to discuss both on Sunrise TV and ABC Conversations. Articles and reviews on the documentary are unanimous in their praise of the BackTrack program and its success in helping struggling youth turn their lives around through 'unconventional' methods, their area.



Links:











MEDIA+ PUBLICITY



In the news

News articles have noted the impact of the BackTrack program and the documentary, praising the former for its success at helping struggling youth turn their lives around.

They have also considered Bernie's methods 'unconventional' for treating vulnerable youth like humans over simply following procedure and ticking boxes. Generally, the documentary has been called heartwarming yet heavy and emotional as it touches upon topics such as the injustice system.



BACKTRACK BOYS: THE JACKAROO AND HIS DOGS GIVING AT-RISK KIDS A SECOND CHANCE - BY THE **GUARDIAN**

WHY BACKTRACK BOYS SHOWS IT'S POSSIBLE TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF TOXIC MASCULINITY - BY THE FIERCE

REVIEW: BACKTRACK BOYS BIFF - BY 4ZZZ DOCO OF THE MONTH: BACKTRACK BOYS - BY PRO BONO **AUSTRALIA**

HELPING TROUBLED KIDS FIND A WAY BACK - BY ABC CONVERSATIONS





RECEPTION Critic reviews



Backtrack Boys received an overwhelming response from audiences, key stakeholders and champions alike. The film was loved for its heartbreaking yet heartwarming story. Viewers praised the emotional and honest depictions of the boys and their situations. The film was also praised by hundreds of viewers for highlighting an important social issue of our time. It sparked recognition of and conversation about the ways in which the system currently fails at-risk youth, and highlighted an alternative model adopting a holistic, compassionate approach.

Every school, every town, has troubled kids who will end up dead or in jail, if nobody gives them the love they need. We usually fail these kids, but we don't need to.

It was an excellent documentary and a very honest look into the lives of the boys and the incredible people who care for them wholeheartedly.

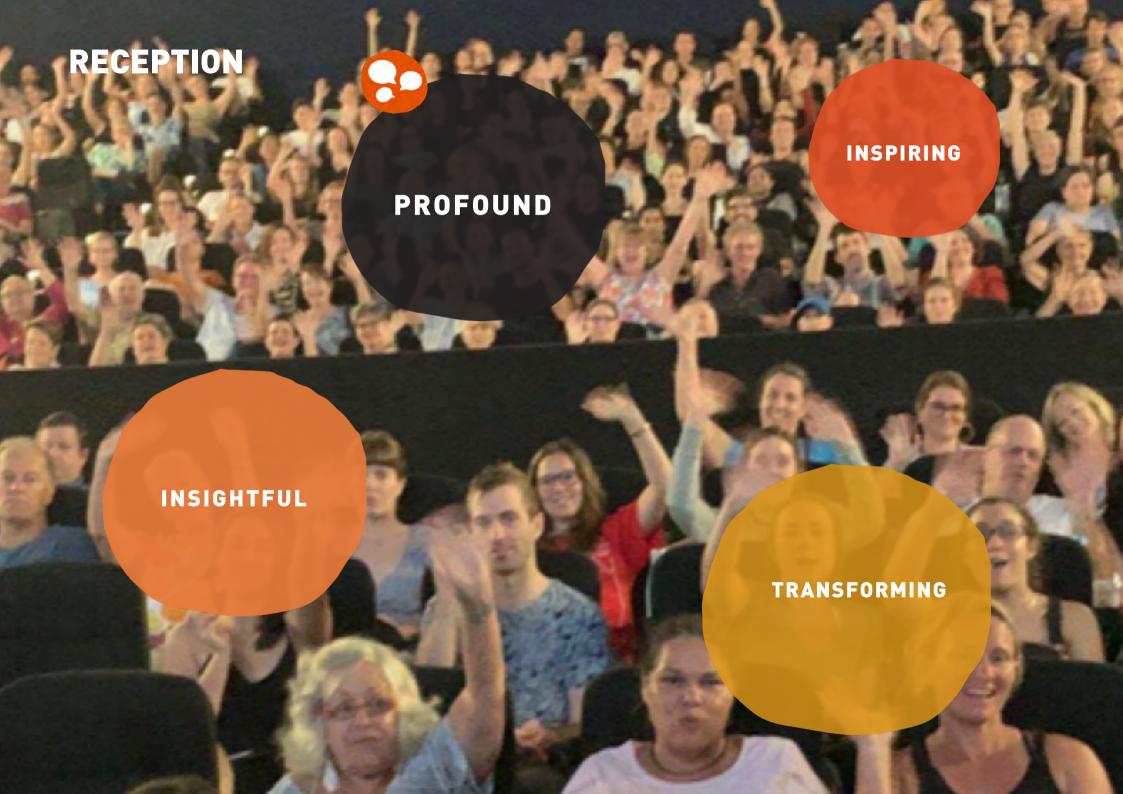
"It's really special. Go and see it. Write stories about it. Tell your friends. This fella Bernie, he's a good fella, a bit of a genius really. What a great story".-

Russel Crowe



Fantastic approach to working with damaged and troubled youth.
Providing thoughtful and appropriate approaches to enable the participants to learn alternative ways of being, belonging and becoming.

The wisdom and poetry of these young blokes trying to break through well worn defences and attacks is both heartbreaking and heartwarming, a wild and rewarding ride that puts it all in perspective



IMPACT STRATEGY



Key messages

01

It's never too late for change.

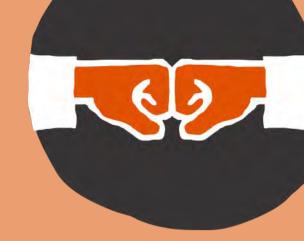
02

Troubled young people need an alternative to juvenile detention centres.

03

We need a different approach to working with young people at risk of social exclusion, particularly in rural and regional areas.





Impact goals

Provide young people with a positive narrative about themselves.

Change the conversation in communities about how they approach youth issues.

Support advocacy organisations working in the youth space.

Shine a light on BackTrack and other youth programs to ensure they continue to receive funding and support.

FILM USE



Backtrack Boys demonstrates how a whole-of-community approach to youth issues creates significantly better outcomes for young people.

A range of community partners have used the film to mobilise support for BackTrack Youth Works, initiate community-wide conversations, educate professionals and high school, TAFE and and to drive new approaches and grassroots programs in their local areas. The film has also been used to elevate visibility of advocacy campaigns and imperatives to #RaiseTheAge.

If you are a teacher I think it will help you from the very first minute, youthworkers, counsellors, and of course parents will learn so much of use about helping kids with their emotions, and their healing and hopes.

- Steve Biddulph (Raising Boys)

Links:



















































66

The documentary is used to increase awareness of BackTrack to new audiences and stakeholders. We use the documentary wherever we think it will help with our objective of helping as many young people having a hard time. We have also started using the documentary as a community engagement activity where likeminded organisations wish to learn about the BackTrack way.

- Backtrack YouthWorks



Recognition and empowerment

The documentary has been valuable for many of the protagonists in the film, including the star of the film Bernie Shakeshaft, CEO of BackTrack, and the young people engaging in the Backtrack Youthworks program. In 2020, Bernie won the Australian Local Hero of the Year at the Australia Day Honours after being nominated by young inmates who saw the documentary in their correctional facility and felt so moved by Bernie's work supporting young people like them. The award recognised his leadership within the youth sector as depicted in the film.

The young people in the program were provided with new opportunities to travel, attend events and speak in Q&As which supported them to build self-esteem and confidence. One participant found it particularly significant being able to share the film and their journey with their community and family.

Importantly, while it was confronting for some young people to relive challenging moments on screen, the film validated experiences and supported the young people in the film to share their journeys with each other and bond as a group. The documentary provided an avenue for them to reflect on their situations, be proud of their progress over time and feel motivated to continue on their own healing journey while inspiring others to do the same.

Bernie's local hero acceptance speech:





"The documentary plays an important part in showing young people they are not alone and that others understand how they are feeling... A good reminder of how far I have come, and of how I can inspire others".

- ZAC, Backtrack & Documentary Participant

"Seeing the development of the boys in the film has been incredible. Seeing Zac speak at screenings, listening to Tyson on the Vivid stage and the kids that went to speak at the FACs Conference was amazing".

- Lisa Hancock, Impact producer

"I see myself as an everyday punter who's just out doing my job and helping disadvantaged kids. To be recognised as a local hero is a real honour".

- Bernie Shakeshaft, Backtrack YouthWorks

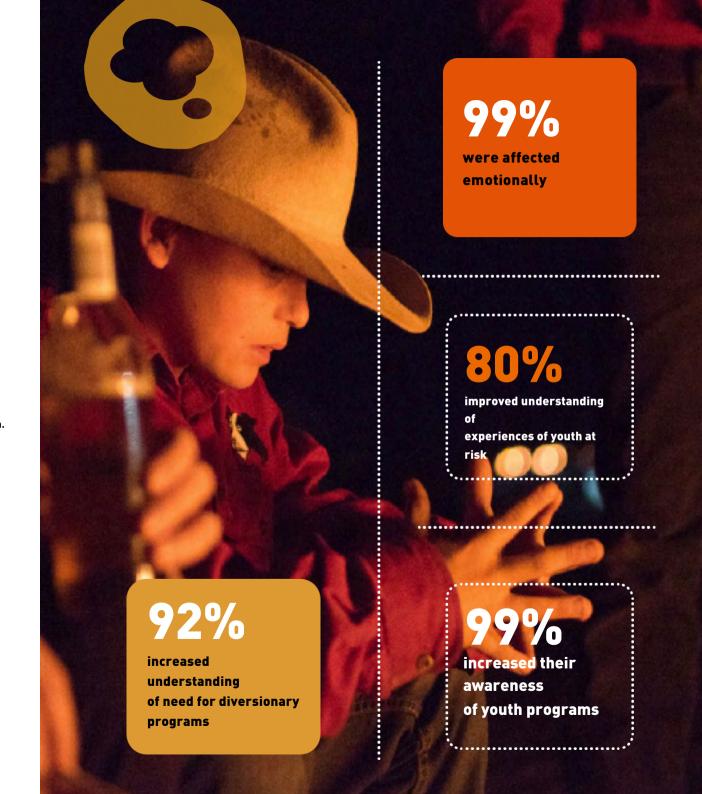
Increased awareness and empathy for vulnerable youth

Backtrack Boys has been incredibly successful at increasing awareness of and empathy for vulnerable and at-risk youth and their experiences.

Survey feedback provided by thousands of audience members across Australia found that 99% were emotionally affected by the documentary and had increased awareness of youth programs and support options for young people at risk of juvenile detention. In addition, 99% had an improved understanding of the need to divert young people from juvenile detention, and the importance of adopting whole-of-community responses to ensure young people aren't falling through the cracks.

The film motivated audiences to take action, with almost half of survey respondents reporting that they would like to take a variety of actions including donating to youth initiatives and signing the #RaiseTheAge petition.

"Very insightful and really highlighted how tough life is for some (especially kids) and the limited options for positive rehabilitation and support I have seen this film 3 times now and the impact is as strong now as the first time. The importance of providing tailored programs and support for disadvantaged youth is critical."





Educational outreach and impact

A key element of the Backtrack Boys impact campaign involved extensive educational outreach to improve awareness, empathy and educational outcomes. A range of educational resources mapped to the Australian curriculum were developed and promoted extensively, reaching more than 1,000 teachers and educators. Educational screenings were piloted in a range of educational settings - , from schools with a high proportion of young people who may relate to the film through to schools with more privileged youth without any insight into other young people's experiences.

The satisfaction, acceptability, usefulness and feasibility of the film and educational materials was confirmed by our teacher survey results, with 100% of all respondents strongly agreeing that in using the film and educational resources their learning objectives were met, their students responded positively and they would use the film again.

After watching the film, students felt sympathy and compassion towards the youth depicted in the film and their experiences. The film helped students to reflect on the important role of friendships, loyalty and having people to trust and open up to. Many shared a newfound desire to give others a second chance, rather than judge them based on their past, due to a greater understanding of the factors that can lead to vulnerability and disadvantage. For some the film provided a new, positive narrative about youth doing it tough and inspired hope. For others, the film exposed them to situations that they wouldn't otherwise been aware of. Overall, the feedback clearly indicated that the film was effective increasing empathy for kids having a difficult time and an understanding of the role the community can play in supporting youth people doing it tough.

Find the Backtrack Boys Educational Resources here:





Community



"Representation matters. They could relate to the lives of the kids represented. They're finally like 'Oh my god, that's me'... It opened up an interesting conversation about the alternatives (or lack thereof) to incarceration for young people."

- Youth detention educator

"Some kids did end up asking a lot of questions because they don't really have that experience here... so it was really good to have a look at how different people have their lives.. The look at the justice system was quite the eye opener for them as well."

- Private college educator

99% would use the film as an educational tool again

750+ **Educational** downloads

STUDENT FEEDBACK ON THEIR LEARNING

- "To have each other's backs and not to judge others on the outside"
- "That kids come from different home lives"
- "You don't know what's going on in other people's lives"
- "Don't judge unless you know the whole story"
- "How to always look out for people and be positive towards young people. Making programs is a good way to help young people and get them to have a better outlook on their life"

Youth validation, hope and inspiration

The Backtrack Boys Impact Campaign has reached thousands of professionals working with young people, including youth workers, juvenile justice workers and educators, to deepen their knowledge and improve their practice when working with young people at risk. Feedback from service providers and educators confirmed the power and usefulness of the film for professional development.

Professional learning participants reported positive outcomes as a result of the film, with over 90% agreeing they learnt something about the experiences of vulnerable youth, will think differently about their own approach in practice, and feel more motivated about their work and the difference they can make. In addition, over 90% agreed that valuable conversations had been started in their workplace or professional network and that new ideas had been sparked for the future. Overall, the film was deemed an effective professional learning tool participants would recommend as a resource to others, imparting valuable new knowledge useful to their practice and validating the often challenging work they are doing.



Watch our online professional development webinars here:



Youth Futures Summit



95%
Improved their understanding of youth vulnerabilities

"The positive and child-centred approach of the Backtrack organisers was inspiring. It gave me a lot of ideas about how workers in child safety can communicate with children and families to get positive results"

- Practitioner

"This was an eye opening, heart breaking, breath taking and soul warming documentary, that taught me so much about the importance of connection and belonging and about youth disadvantage.

This screening was so inspirational. It proves that if you give long-term dedication and effort, a difference can truly be made to a young person's life.

I felt like it was quite a motivating film. What these kids need is some consistency and someone who cares, someone who just keeps on turning up through hard times. At least for me, it validates the work you do."

100%
agreed the film was a useful tool in their work

THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES AND JUSTICE

The Department of Communities and Justice (FACS) held a Backtrack Boys session with 187 child protection caseworkers at their 2019 Practice Conference to deepen the practice of child protection workers and leaders.

The session was rated as the third most useful by attendees. In addition, 95% reported a stronger understanding of how childhood abuse and neglect affects a person's sense of identity and belonging, and 87% reporting a greater appreciation for the role they and others can play to help children or adults feel connected or supported.

Educational outreach and impact

After correctional facility screenings, feedback shows that all young people wanted to see youth programs in their community take a whole-of-community approach like the BackTrack program. The majority also felt the film would help people in the community understand youth like themselves who have been incarcerated (92%), and thought their situation may have been different if they had access to the BackTrack Program or something similar (76%).

Although it was challenging for some young people to watch the film, many reported that it had been validating and inspiring and provided them with hope for their future. Over half of the young people surveyed reported that as a result of seeing the film, they were likely to find ways to participate in youth programs in their community and help other young people once they are released themselves.



Links:

92%

felt the film would help others understand youth in detention

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"The fact that it truly shows that you can bounce back no matter what you've been through, this film has given me so much hope and I hope someday I can volunteer to help out indigenous teens and show them that you can get anywhere if you want to"

- Young person

80%

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said the film gave them hope for the future

9 DETENTION CENTRE SCREENINGS

Backtrack Boys has screened in detention centres across Australia, including:

Brisbane Youth Detention Centre (QLD)
Parkville College (VIC) Secure welfare units
Redlands Youth Justice Service (QLD)
Wellington Correctional Facility (NSW)
Riverina Juvenile Detention Centre (NSW)
Kempsy Maximum Security (NSW)
Don Dale (NT)
Owen Springs School (NT)"
Banksia Hill Detention Centre.

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There is more to life than jail. It inspired me to help younger Aboriginal people in my community. There is more to life than drugs or alcohol and domestic violence.."

- Young person

"It's an overwhelming feeling seeing someone actually believe in us. It motivated me to offer my experience and help if there is a possibility for me to do so."

...........

- Young person

New conversations and initiatives

Overall, BackTrack Boys has facilitated community conversation, engagement and action through targeted community screenings. According to the feedback from hosts and partners, screenings have inspired interest from people involved with schools and universities to provide opportunities to view the documentary as part of their educational program, and many others have been inspired to host their own screening as well. The most significant changes resulting from screenings included raised awareness around youth issues and youth outreach programs, as well as increased empathy and understanding for troubled and disadvantaged youth.

"We had extremely positive feedback from our employees who attended and they expressed a desire to help BackTrack further through volunteering, donations etc."

Links:



support for the #RaiseTheAge campaign

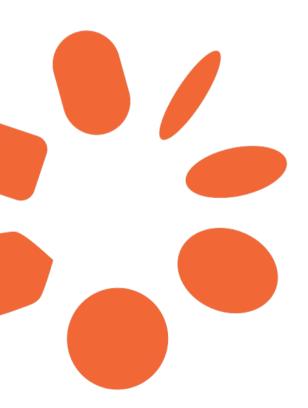
Backtrack Boys has worked with the #RaisetheAge campaign around the broadcast of the film on SBS to stimulate advocacy and action for raising the age of criminal responsibility from 10-14 years. The increased awareness of the current system, and insights into some of the young people who are being sent to or at risk of prison, alongside the depiction of a clear alternative has lead to audiences choosing to support the Amnesty International #RaisetheAge petition, discuss with their networks or advocate for change.

Links:





It takes time to build and sustain the impact of a film, and getting an audience to see it is a crucial starting point. After that, it is important to provide opportunities for them to harness that energy, which may lead to new connections and collaborations.



01

BUILD A PASSIONATE AUDIENCE

The most effective strategy for the film's impact campaign has been getting an audience to see the film. Rolling out the community screening program has been especially important in reaching a wider audience and building a fan base on a grassroots level. Send your screening hosts key assets like images, posters and flyers to help them put on a great event and promote the screening. For screenings where the film team can't be present, provide hosts with screening and discussion guides to help them put on a successful screening and Q&A. that energy, which may lead to new connections and collaborations.

02

ENGAGE WITH YOUR AUDIENCE POST-SCREENING

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Once the film has done its job of raising awareness and inspiring an emotional response, it is important to provide a way for people to harness that energy afterwards. Follow up and keep your audience updated as your campaign progresses about how they can get involved. Ask for feedback and collect as many quotes and testimonials as possible after people have seen your film, whether it's for the film itself or the event it was screened at. Using the responses from the audiences, it would be easier to target the impact campaign accordingly.



It takes time to build and sustain the impact of a film, and getting an audience to see it is a crucial starting point. After that, it is important to provide opportunities for them to harness that energy, which may lead to new connections and collaborations.



03

COLLABORATE AND WORK 03 WITH YOUR PARTNERS

Grow your film's fan base by asking people to become part of your campaign and champion your cause. Host private screenings for key partners pre-release and ask them to spread the word by providing easy tools to help them invite people. To engage communities, try to get key groups involved to attend, schools, council, media and ask hosts to engage them in a discussion around the film. Work with your partners on a shared vision by supporting their goals and campaigns, and collaborating on projects throughout the impact campaign.

04

IMPACT TAKES TIME

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After building up an audience that is not just passionate about the film, but also the issues it presents, it takes time to sustain the impact that has been formed. The cinema release gets interest, and the TV broadcast enables you to reach a large audience, which makes it crucial to capture the momentum in those points of time. Providing people the tools to use the film for awareness, fundraising or educational purposes has been a key part of sustaining its impact. A documentary's impact is never ending because it will always inspire new audiences who see it.







DIRECTOR & PRODUCER

CATHERINE SCOTT has worked as a documentary filmmaker for over 20 years. She was Senior Producer SBS Dateline and more recently a freelance video journalist for the program.



EDITOR

ANDREA LANG ASE has been editing documentaries for about twenty years. Recently she cut We Don't Need A Map, the opening night film of the Sydney Film Festival (SFF) 2017.



CONSULTANT PRODUCER

MADELINE HEATHERTON is an experienced and multi-awarded director and producer. She works across a wide range of documentary and factual programs which have been broadcast in over 60 countries across networks.



EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

DR MITZI GOLDMAN is a founder and CEO of the Documentary Australia Foundation, having been instrumental in its realisation since its inception in 2006.

ORGANISATIONS

ACF ATF Scarlet's Fund Anderson Body Movement Big4 Inverloch Holiday Park **Bondi Meditation Centre** Collier Charitable Fund **Guardian Accounting** Insurance Council of Australia James N Kirby Foundation MaiTri Foundation Matana Foundation for Young People NBN Pilbara Meta Maya Aboriginal Corporation The Jack Brockhoff Foundation

The Natural Helper Thyne Reid Foundation

VFFF

wholeheART

Wongaburra Horsemanship Centre

ORGANISATIONS

T Allen David Armstrong Dione Baird **Debra Barnard** Diane Barry **Tracey Barton Cathy Bennett** Michael Boeson Sharon Broughton Emma Cate Jo Chichester Carol Cooper Darryl Coulthard **Christopher Daw Collette Dowling** Joanna Dovle Kate Endresz **Andy Evans** Eileen Fitgerald Michaela Fitzsimons Jane Ford Joanna Gee Ben Guerin Michael Hagen **Natalie Hatchard**

Ian Heriot **Prue Hughes**

Kirby Johnstone

Sue Jorgensen

Haley Lambert

Kathryn Lowry Nicole Marcusson Anne McAsh Paul McGovern Stuart lain Mckern

Julia Mooser

Trevor Morris

Nicky Nelson

Anne Page Kerrie Pascoe Ralph Pliner

Robin Laurie

Kate Lips

John Postle Deslyn Randall Stuart Ravner Dave Robinson Paul Rosser Jackie Sailer John Sevior Geraldine Slattery Marnie Sole Jessica Steiger-Thorpe Allan Stone Jennifer Strauss Cameron Sugden Ahri Tallon Jill Thompson-White Kerry Thompson **Chris Viney** Michelle Walker Vicky Wallace Wayne & Louise Whatman Sally White Mitty Williams Jean Wortley

Judith Young

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