

TRIGGER WARNING:

This film deals with issues of domestic violence and may be triggering to survivors of abuse.



PRESS PACK

big bad love



Key Credits

Big Bad Love is a Briony Benjamin Media production produced in association with the Australian Broadcasting Commission, Screen Australia and Pavilion Entertainment.

Writer/Director:	Briony Benjamin
Producer:	Susan MacKinnon & Daniel Joyce
Editor:	Karryn de Cinque & Ash Watson
Host:	Becky Lucas
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Location Sound:	Sarah Henty & Richard Horniblow
Grade & Online:	Billy Wychgel & James Cowie
Sound:	Angus Robertson & Joel McLean
Post Production:	Spectrum Films
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What **would you do** if your friend was being abused?





- Intimate partner violence contributes to more death, disability and illness in women aged 15 to 44 than any other preventable risk factor.¹
- Every week at least one Australian woman is killed by a partner or their ex.²
- One in four Australian women has experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner.³
- Both women and men are more likely to experience violence at the hands of men - 95% of all victims of violence in Australia report a male perpetrator.⁴

1. *Based on Victorian figures from VicHealth (2004) The health costs of violence: Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne. A comparable national study is pending.*

2. *Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), 2015.*

3. *Cox, P. (2015) Violence against women: Additional analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey 2012, Horizons Research Report, Issue 1, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), Sydney; and Woodlock, D., Healey, L., Howe, K., McGuire, M., Geddes, V. and Granek, S. (2014) Voices against violence paper one: Summary report and recommendations, Women with Disabilities Victoria, Office of the Public Advocate and Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria.*

4. *<http://www.ourwatch.org.au/Understanding-Violence/Facts-and-figures> (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2012.)*





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Technical Specifications:

Genre:	Documentary
Duration:	26'30"
Aspect:	16:9 (14:9 title safe)
Language:	English
Release Format:	HD Digital Master
Release sound:	Stereo
Copyright:	Briony Benjamin Media Pty Ltd
Completed:	12 August 2016
Country of Origin:	Australia





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EPG

Comedian Becky Lucas sets out to uncover what an abusive relationship really looks like and how you can help if a friend is trapped in one.

One Line Synopsis

After discovering her best friend was violently abused by her partner, stand-up comedian Becky Lucas wants to know how you can spot an abusive relationship and what you can do about it.

Short Synopsis

Comedian Becky Lucas recently found out one of her closest childhood friends had suffered years of violence and abuse at the hands of her partner. With young women 18-24 being most at risk of abuse Becky sets out to understand what an abusive relationship looks like, how it begins and why it's so hard to intervene. She meets experts and psychologists to figure out why she missed the signs, conducts a social experiment on the street to see how the average bystander reacts to domestic violence, and seeks out the stories of young survivors of domestic violence to discover what anyone can do when confronted with domestic violence.





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Synopsis

Comedian Becky Lucas, recently discovered that one of her best childhood friends Jess, had suffered years of horrific violence and abuse at the hands her partner. At the time Becky had suspected something might be wrong but she wasn't equipped to see what was happening and so did nothing. Becky still feels a deep regret that she didn't act on her suspicions and help her friend. But what does an abusive relationship even look like? How does it begin? And what can anyone do if they suspect someone they know is in trouble?

"Today I'm going to ask them what domestic violence was like in their day – you know just a light conversation starter over tea and bickies."

– **Becky Lucas**

Becky starts to answer these questions when she meets her friends at a local retirement village, getting a sense of what domestic violence was like in their day. After chatting with the women she learns that when they were younger one didn't intervene in other people's affairs, domestic violence was a taboo topic and it was seen as private business.



"Well it's difficult to talk about a thing that we didn't talk about. We didn't have a term to speak about it like domestic violence."

– **Maggie**





Today, at least we are talking about domestic violence. Despite this, 1 in 4 Australian women will still suffer abuse from an intimate partner. Becky is surprised to learn that it's women aged 18-24 that are most at risk of abuse. She meets two young women, Ella and Lauren, who have both survived violent and controlling relationships to better understand how abusive relationships begin. Shocked by the brutality of their stories and the violence occurring behind closed doors Becky wonders how people would respond if they could see the violence that affects so many. She sets up a public social experiment where actors play out an abusive role play on the street. It's a nerve wracking and tense experience as people respond in a variety of ways. When is it safe to intervene? Is it safe? What does anyone do when confronted with violence?



Becky meets with experts to understand people's reactions when confronted with domestic violence in public and to learn about what to do if someone sees or suspects domestic violence in their daily life or within their friendships and networks. Becky attends a workshop to uncover the tactics that abusers use and learn more about the manipulation present from the outset of abusive relationships.

Out of this experience Becky emerges realising that abusive relationships look very different to what she first thought. As a comedian Becky is used to making jokes about taboo subjects but now she's determined to make the subject of domestic violence one people can talk about openly in the hope that other women will find the support around them that they need to leave a dangerous relationship.

"We've all got an idea of what we think an abuser looks like. It makes us feel a bit safer if we think it's the guy with the XXXX tattoo on his forehead head-butting the customer service desk. But I realise now it's not that simple."

– Becky Lucas





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Becky Lucas - Presenter

Becky Lucas is one of most exciting new voices on the Australian comedy scene and is quickly commanding attention. Becky has spent years writing and performing stand-up nationally, locally and in her bedroom. She was a National RAW Comedy finalist in 2013 and was hand picked for prestigious Melbourne International Comedy Festivals' The Comedy Zone showcase in 2014. In that same year Becky also opened for Wil Anderson and performed at Splendour In The Grass.

She has written for Josh Thomas's Emmy nominated hit show Please Like Me and was named as one of BuzzFeed's 27 funniest Australian comedians on Twitter. 2015 has seen Becky perform her debut solo show Hightide to sell out crowds and rave reviews in Sydney and Melbourne and was invited to perform at the legendary UCB Theatre in Los Angeles. You can hear Becky on Triple J as a regular guest with her own weekly segment, "The Grey Area" on Drive with Veronica and Lewis.

Website: www.beckylucas.com.au





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Ella - Survivor

At the age of 16 Ella found herself in an extremely violent and abusive relationship. She fell in love with a man who before long would criticize her constantly, spit in her face, kick her in the back, smash her head on the ground and leave her bruised and beaten on a daily basis until with the support of one of her friends she finally found the courage to leave.



"It's hard, it's really hard but you need to talk about it..You just need to open up and ask for help, cause they are there and there is people that will support you and stand by you and people that love you. You're not alone."

- Ella



Lauren - Survivor

At the age of 18 young university student Lauren fell for a handsome charming man. What began as a romantic and loving relationship quickly escalated to one where daily beatings, strangulation and acts of coercion were common place. Yet Lauren was unaware she was in an abusive relationship. It wasn't until she went and saw a psychologist for anxiety that she realised her relationship wasn't normal.

"I didn't know what else to do this was my entire life and how do you leave your own life?"

- Lauren





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Dina McMillan - Social Psychologist

Dr Dina McMillan is a social psychologist and relationship expert with both a Master's degree and PhD in social psychology from Stanford University. She runs seminars called 'Unmasking the Abuser' and 'Protect Your Daughters' which focus on teaching women about the early warning signs of abusive relationships.



Shannon Spriggs Murdoch - Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP - Bystander Training)

Dr Shannon Spriggs Murdoch has spent the last nine years delivering and developing the Mentors in Violence Prevention program focused on preventing all forms of violence and utilising a bystander approach to intervention. She has facilitated almost 700 training sessions with various groups including high school students, professional athletes, military service personnel, and business men and women.





The Filmmaker

Filmmaker Personal Statement – Briony Benjamin, Director

About two years ago, I read a shocking fact: **One in three Australian women will suffer physical abuse in their lifetime**. It struck a personal note for me: I'm one of three girls...I thought of my sisters and me, and how statistically one of us might find ourselves in trouble at some point...How would our friends and family even know?

I wanted to understand how you could fall for someone that could end up hurting you. I wanted to understand how violent and abusive relationships begin, how they manifest and what anyone can do to help someone if they think they might be in trouble.

Soon I would be shocked again to learn that women aged 18-24 are most at risk of abuse in a relationship. I'd always thought of domestic violence as something that affected people that were married with children in long term relationships.

Around the same time as I was grappling with these issues I saw Becky Lucas performing her Melbourne Comedy Show. It was a hilarious tale of growing up with her best friend in a small coastal town. But this story ended with sadness and regret that she didn't intervene and help her friend who had been abused through much of her teenage years. I was so moved by Becky's show and her ability to blend comedy with a genuine and thought provoking story I approached her to host the documentary. Bravely she agreed to come be involved.

It has been a challenging and at times harrowing project to work on. Hearing brave young women talk about the deliberate, systematic and horrific violence they have endured at the hands of men that were meant to love them is not an easy concept to stomach.

Throughout the making of the film I've had so many emotional conversations as one by one another friend, colleague or complete stranger has opened up to me about their experience of abuse, often they've never spoken to anyone about it. There is a cloud of secrecy and shame that surrounds most survivor's experiences but this isn't an issue that affects some far away group of women we don't know; it's happening and it's everywhere, very likely to someone you care deeply about.

It is my hope that this film will help people understand what an abusive relationship looks like and that it can start a conversation about the difference between a healthy and unhealthy relationship. I hope that audiences may see that we are all part of a culture that allows violence against women to thrive but we can also play a role in changing that culture to one where domestic is unacceptable.

It's not easy or comfortable to get involved in other people's personal affairs but what I've learnt in making this documentary is there is always something you can do. Collectively we can send a message to victims that they are supported and believed and that their abusers violence will not be tolerated or accepted. The smallest action - something we are all capable of - can change a life.





Making of big bad love

Months of research and preparation went into developing Big Bad Love and the story journey. Despite the challenging content matter I was determined to make something that had lighter elements that would connect to a younger audience and give some reprieve from the gravity of the topic. In Becky Lucas we found a guide to take us on the journey who was able to blend her comedic style with her sensitivity and intelligence whilst sharing her own personal experience of being a bystander to domestic violence.

The biggest challenge initially was finding young women that wanted to share their stories and that were safe to do so. Katie Acheson at Youth Action got behind the project from the outset and was incredible connecting us with services and some young women who were supported by them.

We found two wonderful, brave young women who wanted to share their stories in the hope it could help other young women avoid what they had been through. For the safety of our interviewees and also for legal reasons we decided not to identify the girls and because of this we created a visual palette of images we would use over the top of the girls voices. With our talented cinematographer Jody Muston we developed a visual style that would give the film a fresh, instagrammy aesthetic.

Due to the sensitive nature of some of the interviews and the seminar where they didn't allow men into the room it meant we needed an all female crew on most shoot days. I'm so grateful that was the case because it meant we sought out some wonderful crew that I wouldn't have had the opportunity to work with otherwise.

There is so much you cannot learn until you just get out and make something and being a part of the Opening Shot program has been an incredible experience. To have had the support of the teams at the ABC and Screen Australia who have mentored me through the entire process and ensured that I had the best people around me has been the most amazing learning curve of my career so far.







Briony Benjamin, Director

Briony has specialised in producing and directing social and environmental campaigning digital content on a small budget for maximum impact. She's directed TVCs, web-series and digital content for dynamic organisations such as Getup, World Wildlife Fund, The Climate Council, 38 Degrees & The Sum of Us generating millions of views on some of the most complex issues facing our world. She's passionate about producing for purpose and sees media as one of the most powerful forces for change. This is her first documentary for ABC and it's been an incredible experience working with an amazing crew.



Susan MacKinnon, Producer

Susan has worked as an independent producer for 27 years, winning awards and international acclaim. Her most credits include Cast From The Storm for the ABC, cinema documentary Paul Kelly – Stories of Me, Life In Movement, the tragic Tanja Liedtke Story, winner of the Best Documentary at the Sydney Film Festival and Honeybee Blues for SBS. Other films include the acclaimed The Oasis, In The Company Of Actors, Global Haywire (by Academy Award winner Bruce Petty), Men And Their Sheds, and the classic Eternity.

Susan is a founder, and for 8 years was Co-Executive Director of the Documentary Australia Foundation, established in 2006 to bring filmmakers and philanthropists together. She was formerly the Documentary Investment Manager at the Australian Film Finance Corporation. She served 6 years as a Board Director for the South Australian Film Corporation, and was a founding member and served 6 years on the Board of the Australian International Documentary Conference.





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Daniel Joyce, Producer

Daniel's first film, the short documentary *Murder Mouth*, polarised audiences - fuelling furious debate, plenty of gasps and tears, and along the way picked up selections and awards at festivals around the world, including Slamdance, American Documentary Festival, and Inside Film Awards.

The broadcast spin-off *Meatwork* continued to challenge the audience's daily diet - gaining access to an Australian abattoir and over two months explored the lives and minds of the slaughtermen that work there. *Meatwork* screened on ABC2 in 2012, and Daniel is now taking the project even further to produce *Maddie Parry: Tough Jobs*, a second spin-off commissioned by the ABC exploring the people working in morally fraught jobs throughout Australia - shooting in locations as varied and challenging as the deep forest of Tasmania, abortion clinics and the brothels of Melbourne. Most recently Daniel has produced the feature documentary *Barbecue*, filming across thirteen countries - revealing strangely inspiring characters and shared global vision of the good life.





Definitions:

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence: – refers to acts of violence that occur in domestic settings between two people who are, or were, in an intimate relationship. It includes physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse.

Emotional/psychological violence: – can include a range of controlling behaviours such as control of finances, isolation from family and friends, continual humiliation, threats against children or being threatened with injury or death.

Resources

Our Watch

<http://www.ourwatch.org.au/Understanding-Violence/Facts-and-figures>

White Ribbon

<http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/>

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria

<http://www.dvrcv.org.au/help-advice/guide-for-families-friends-and-neighbours>





FAQ's

What can you do?

If you or someone you know is impacted by domestic, family or intimate partner abuse call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or visit 1800RESPECT.org.au.

In an emergency, call 000.

Should I get involved?

Sourced from: Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria

<http://www.dvrcv.org.au/help-advice/guide-for-families-friends-and-neighbours>

Many people worry that they will be 'interfering' if they get involved, or that it is a 'private matter'. But it is equally worrying if someone is being abused and you say nothing. Your support can make a difference. You might risk some embarrassment if you approach her and she rejects your support or tells you your suspicions are wrong. But if you approach her sensitively, without being critical, most people will appreciate an expression of concern for their well-being, even if they are not ready to talk about their situation. It is unlikely you will make things 'worse' by expressing concern.

How can I recognise abuse?

You might be unsure if what your friend or relative is experiencing is 'abuse'. Maybe you just have some sense that something is 'wrong' in her relationship. Sometimes there may be signs that indicate that there is abuse. But often there will be nothing obvious.

Signs that someone is being abused

- She seems afraid of her partner or is always very anxious to please him or her.
- She has stopped seeing her friends or family, or cuts phone conversations short when her partner is in the room.
- Her partner often criticises her or humiliates her in front of other people.
- She says her partner pressures or forces her to do sexual things.
- Her partner often orders her about or makes all the decisions (for example, her partner controls all the money, tells her who she can see and what she can do).
- She often talks about her partner's 'jealousy', 'bad temper' or 'possessiveness'.
- She has become anxious or depressed, has lost her confidence, or is unusually quiet.
- She has physical injuries (bruises, broken bones, sprains, cuts etc). She may give unlikely explanations for physical injuries.





- Her children seem afraid of her partner, have behaviour problems, or are very withdrawn or anxious.
- She is reluctant to leave her children with her partner.
- After she has left the relationship, her partner is constantly calling her, harassing her, following her, coming to her house or waiting outside.

How should I approach her?

Approach your friend or relative in a sensitive way, letting her know your own concerns. Tell her you're worried about her, then explain why. For example

I'm worried about you because I've noticed you seem really unhappy lately.

Don't be surprised if she seems defensive or rejects your support. She might be scared of worrying you if she tells you about the abuse. She may not be ready to admit to being abused, or may feel ashamed and afraid of talking about it. She might have difficulty trusting anyone after being abused. If the victim is a man, he may feel particularly embarrassed about speaking about the abuse as he may be seen as 'weak' or 'unmanly'.

Don't push the person into talking if they are uncomfortable, but let them know that you're there if they need to talk. Be patient, and keep an ear out for anything that indicates they are ready to talk about the abuse.

What can I do to help her?

The most important thing you can do is to listen without judging, respect her decisions, and help her to find ways to become stronger and safer.

You don't have to fully understand to be of assistance. All you have to do is give your time and love without being judgemental.

- **Listen to what she has to say.**
- **Believe what she tells you.** It will have taken a lot for her to talk to you. People are much more likely to cover up or downplay the abuse, rather than to make it up or exaggerate. You might find it hard to imagine someone you know could behave abusively. But the person who is abusive will probably show you a very different side to the side the victim sees.
- **Take the abuse seriously.** Abuse can be damaging both physically and emotionally. Don't underestimate the danger she may be in.
- **Help her to recognise the abuse** and understand how it may be affecting her or her children.
- **Tell her you think she has been brave** in being able to talk about the abuse, and in being able to keep going despite the abuse.
- **Help to build her confidence in herself.**





- **Help her to understand that the abuse is not her fault** and that no-one deserves to be abused, no matter what they do. Let her know you think that the way her partner is treating her is wrong. For example, 'No-one, not even your husband, has the right to mistreat you'
- **Help her to protect herself.** You could say 'I'm afraid of what he could do to you or the children' or 'I'm worried that it will get worse'. Talk to her about how she thinks she could protect herself. See the section 'Helping to increase her safety' (see below).
- **Help her to think about what she can do** and see how you can help her to achieve it.
- **Offer practical assistance** like minding the children for a while, cooking a meal for her, offering a safe place to stay, transport or to accompany her to court, etc.
- **Respect her right to make her own decisions**, even if you don't agree with them. Respect her cultural or religious values and beliefs.
- **Maintain some level of regular contact with her.** Having an opportunity to talk regularly to a supportive friend or relative can be very important.
- **Find out about Intervention Orders** (Victorian name for a court protection order – in NSW these are called 'Apprehended Violence Orders', and in other states they are 'Protection', 'Restraining' or 'Domestic Violence' Orders) and other legal options available and pass this information on to her if she wants it.
- **Tell her about the services available.** Remind her that if she calls a service, she can just get support and information, they won't pressure her to leave if she doesn't want to.
- **Keep supporting her after she has left the relationship.** The period of separation could be a dangerous time for her, as the abuse may increase. She may need practical support and encouragement to help her establish a new life and recover from the abuse. She could also seek counselling or join a support group.

Questions you could ask and things you could say

These are just some ideas. It is important that you only say what you believe, and use your own words.

The way he treats you is wrong.

What can I do to help you?

How do you think his behaviour has affected you?

How do you think his behaviour is affecting your children?

I'm worried about what he could do to you or the children.

What do you think you should do?

What are you afraid of if you leave?

What are you afraid of if you stay?





What not to do ...

When talking to someone who is being abused, some things may not help, or may stop her from wanting to confide in you fully.

Here are some of the things victims of abuse say did not help:

- Don't blame her for the abuse or ask questions like 'what did you do for him to treat you like that?' or 'why do you put up with it?', or 'how can you still be in love with him?' These questions suggest that it is somehow her fault.
- Don't keep trying to work out the 'reasons' for the abuse. Concentrate on supporting the person who is being abused.
- Don't be critical if she says she still loves her partner, or if she leaves but then returns to the relationship. Leaving an abusive partner takes time, and your support is really important.
- Don't criticise her partner. Criticise the abusive behaviour and let her know that no-one has the right to abuse her (for example, say 'your partner shouldn't treat you like that'). Criticism of her partner is only likely to make her want to defend him or her.
- Don't give advice, or tell her what you would do. This will only reduce her confidence to make her own decisions. Listen to her and give her information, not advice.
- Don't pressure her to leave or try to make decisions on her behalf. Focus on listening and supporting her to make her own decisions. She knows her own situation best.

Whats the difference between a bad relationship and an abusive one?

For family violence to be present, there are two key attributes to it. One of them is that one party is in fear of the other. The other is that the abuser uses a planned, systematic approach to remove a person's confidence, support networks and independence in order to highlight their own power and control within the relationship.

Annette Gillespie, Head of Victoria's Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre.

¹<https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2015/march/1425128400/jess-hill/home-truths>





What about violence against men?

Source: Our Watch

¹<http://www.ourwatch.org.au/Understanding-Violence/Facts-and-figures>

All violence is wrong, regardless of the sex of the victim or perpetrator. But there are distinct gendered patterns in the perpetration and impact of violence. For example, both women and men are more likely to experience violence at the hands of men, with around 95% of all victims of violence in Australia reporting a male perpetrator.

While men are more likely to experience violence by other men in public places, women are more likely to experience violence from men they know, often in the home. The overwhelming majority of acts of domestic violence and sexual assault are perpetrated by men against women, and this violence is likely to have more severe impacts on female than male victims.

Why do women stay in abusive relationships?

Source: White Ribbon

¹http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/uploads/media/updated_factsheets_Nov_13/Factsheet_10_Ten_Common_Myths_and_Misconceptions.pdf

There are many reasons women stay in abusive relationships. They include fear that the violence will escalate, financial dependence, social stigma, lack of self-confidence, isolation, religious and moral values, love and commitment and concern for children, family pressures and lack of community support, including affordable accommodation. A man who is using violence against his female partner typically uses a range of strategies to encourage her compliance and dependence, such as monitoring her movements, destroying her self-esteem, and encouraging her to blame herself for the abuse. These dynamics too make it hard to leave abusive relationships.⁵

Do some people provoke the violence and bring it on themselves?

Source: White Ribbon

¹http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/uploads/media/updated_factsheets_Nov_13/Factsheet_10_Ten_Common_Myths_and_Misconceptions.pdf

Responsibility for violence must rest solely with the abuser. Most abused people try to do everything they can to please their partner and avoid further violent episodes.

5. http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/uploads/media/updated_factsheets_Nov_13/Factsheet_10_Ten_Common_Myths_and_Misconceptions.pdf





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Final Credits

Director

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Presenter

BECKY LUCAS

Producers

SUSAN MACKINNON
DANIEL JOYCE

Executive Producers

MARCUS GILLEZEAU
JOSH POMERANZ

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DANIEL PARSONS
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NATASHA-ROSE PIZZICA

Production Assistant

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Talent Provided By

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ANGUS ROBERTSON
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Re-Recording Mixer

JOEL McLEAN

Archival Footage

ABC LICENSING

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THE FRONT
ETERNAL PICTURES

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DINA MCMILLAN
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KATIE ACHESON
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HANNAH GRANT
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MICHAEL SALTER
KAY SCHUBACH
KAREN WILLIS

Retirement Village

DIANNE BARRY
YVONNE BRODERICK
MAGGY BROWN
JACK CALLAGHAN
BEVERLEY CHAN

Actors

Social Experiment
PAUL AYRE
AMANDA MAPLE-BROWN





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Young Girls

LUCINDA EVANS
NINA LOUISE

Teenage Girl

OLIVIA PARSONSON

Opening Scene

JACK BALLHAUSEN	CHARLOTTE BENTLEY
ROGER CAMERON	LISA CAMILLO
HENRY CARROLL	GENEVIEVE CRAIG
SHANE 'JACKO' JACKSON	STEFANIE JACKSON
DANIEL JOYCE	EMMA MCILROY
RACHEL MORELL	OLIVIA PARSONSON
JEREMY PHILLIPS - YELLAND	DILSHAN RAIN
FELICITY ROBERTSON	GILES ROBERTS
JASON ROXBURGH	ANGELA SCAREFONE
PAM SCHA	JAROD 'WATO' WATSON

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