A person with long hair, seen from behind, stands in a fenced-in area, possibly a schoolyard or sports field. The person is wearing a dark t-shirt and light-colored trousers. The fence is made of chain-link metal. In the background, there are buildings and trees under a bright sky.

# KINGS OF BAXTER

12 young offenders. 2 Shakespearean actors.  
Can they conquer Macbeth?

<http://www.metromagazine.com.au>

<http://theeducationshop.com.au>

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A STUDY GUIDE BY  
KATY MARRINER



Running  
time: 66  
min

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*Kings of Baxter* (2017) is a documentary following juvenile justice detainees as they create a production of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The film documents Bell Shakespeare's landmark education program in Frank Baxter Juvenile Detention Centre on the NSW Central Coast. Through observational footage and interviews, *Kings of Baxter* explores the young men's bravado, fear and self-doubt, over three months of rehearsal, leading up to a final performance for friends, family and fellow inmates.

*Kings of Baxter* official website: <https://kingsofbaxter.com/>

## CURRICULUM LINKS

*Kings of Baxter* is suitable viewing for students in Years 9 – 12 in Civics and Citizenship, Drama, English, Health and Physical Education, Legal Studies, Media and VET Community Services.

The documentary can also be used to support the teaching of Pastoral Care programs at Years 9 – 12. It is important that students are provided with strategies to support their learning about themselves and others. Students with well-developed social and emotional skills find it easier to manage themselves, relate to others, develop resilience and a sense of self.

Activities in this study guide provide opportunities for students to:

- investigate and form opinions about juvenile justice in Australia;
- develop an understanding of the impact of detention and the provision of rehabilitation programs for young offenders;
- develop an ability to identify, collect and process information from a range of sources and engage in its interpretation and analysis;
- discuss determinants of the health and wellbeing of youth;
- gain an awareness of how performance is shaped and given meaning;
- analyse a devised performance;
- analyse, explain and evaluate the features of a text and how the features of the text influence audience response;
- explain ways in which a text reinforces or challenges social, cultural and artistic values;
- develop and justify their own interpretations of a text;
- create a wide range of texts, make presentations and contribute actively to class and group discussions.

Teachers are advised to consult the Australian Curriculum online at <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/> and curriculum outlines relevant to their state or territory for further information.

This study guide is organised into three sections:

- **Before viewing *Kings of Baxter*:** This section provides opportunities for students to engage in a discussion of the ideas and issues relevant to *Kings of Baxter*.
- **Close analysis of *Kings of Baxter*:** This section of the study guide provides opportunities for students to make a close analysis of *Kings of Baxter*.
- **After viewing *Kings of Baxter*:** This section provides opportunities for students to create responses inspired by their discussion and analysis of *Kings of Baxter* and to pursue further investigations of the ideas and issues relevant to the documentary.

The activities in each section promote student engagement and active participation via individual reflection, class discussions, and small group and team work. Multiple activities are provided to allow teachers to select those which will best suit the demands of the subject and the needs of the students.

It is recommended that teachers preview *Kings of Baxter*. It contains coarse language and references to drug use.



## SYNOPSIS

*Kings of Baxter* explores the challenging and emotional journey of young offenders and their teachers as they embark on a landmark Bell Shakespeare program to stage a performance of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in front of their families and fellow inmates.

The Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre accommodates males aged from sixteen to twenty-one years of age. Approximately half of the juvenile offenders are Indigenous Australians, and almost all are from low socio-economic backgrounds, convicted of offences that include robbery, assault, and murder. Many of these juvenile offenders arrive with low literacy skills and little formal schooling.

*Kings of Baxter* explores life on the inside for these young men as well as the effects of the Bell Shakespeare program and the emotional toll it takes on them as they work towards the performance. Due to statutory laws regarding the identification of juvenile offenders, the full faces of the boys have been obscured and they are identified by pseudonyms.

We witness the anxiety, the crises of self-confidence, the idiosyncratic senses of humour, the machismo, the bullshit and the truths as they are pushed to become vulnerable and exposed on stage.

Through their own interpretations of *Macbeth*, the boys are challenged to consider their own place in the world: their choices, circumstances, and future. The humanising act of creating art acts as a catalyst to reveal those truths and challenge our perceptions of troubled youth.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I never felt like I was smart enough for Shakespeare. Growing up, I struggled with the language, couldn't connect to the themes, and quite frankly, would rather be doing anything else than reading an 'oldplay'. That is until I watched a performance of *The Merchant of Venice* as a fourteen-year-old, and I watched the actor playing Shylock - a wealthy, but persecuted Jew, deliver the lines:

'Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?'

I had been hit in the guts. Here was a 400-year-old play, set in a city on the other side of the earth, and somehow these words reflected issues still prevalent in Australia in 1996, just as they did 400 years ago, 100 years ago, today, and likely, for many years to come. This is the power of Shakespeare: universal truths, themes, and characters that can enable us to examine our own existence centuries later.

When I first learned about Bell Shakespeare's program in Frank Baxter Juvenile Detention Centre, I knew I had to document it. I told him that very moment, and immediately encouraged my friends Claire Evans (producer) and Josh Heath (cinematographer) to help realise the potential of this project.

Through *Kings of Baxter*, we aim to offer insight into the life of these young Australian offenders; around half of whom are Indigenous Australians, and almost all from low socio-economic backgrounds. These young men are our youth. They are the next generation of Australians; and statistically, the fact that they have entered the correctional system means that there is an exponentially higher chance that their children will too, and their children's children after that. The theatre program in Baxter doesn't seek to rehabilitate these boys, but it does aim to inspire them, give them confidence, and an opportunity to use their voices in a new, creative way.

We hope this film will challenge perceptions of these 'troubled kids', break stereotypes and bring an understanding of their situations through exploration of systemic issues. Granted unprecedented access to these young men, I know their stories will connect with the audience.

We also want to shine a light on a group of tireless teachers, centre staff, and art educators who do all they can to offer these boys opportunity and a distraction from their harsh realities - to capture their joys, frustrations, defeats and triumphs.

**JACK YABSLEY - DIRECTOR**

**JACK  
YABSLEY -  
DIRECTOR**



**CLAIRE  
YVONNE  
EVANS -  
PRODUCER**



**SUSAN  
MACKINNON  
- EXECUTIVE  
PRODUCER**



## FRANK BAXTER JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTRE

FRANK BAXTER JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTRE IS THE LARGEST JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTRE IN NEW SOUTH WALES WITH A CAPACITY FOR 120 YOUNG OFFENDERS. LOCATED ON THE NSW CENTRAL COAST, THE CENTRE ACCOMMODATES MALES AGED 16 TO 21 YEARS CONVICTED OF OFFENCES THAT MAY INCLUDE ROBBERY, BREAK AND ENTER, ASSAULT, AND IN RARE CASES MURDER. MANY OF THESE JUVENILE OFFENDERS ARRIVE WITH LOW LITERACY SKILLS AND LITTLE FORMAL SCHOOLING, WITH LESS THAN 40 PER CENT ATTENDING SCHOOL IN THE COMMUNITY BEFORE THEY COME INTO CUSTODY.

\* Recommended link

NSW Government Justice: Juvenile Justice

[www.juvenile.justice.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.juvenile.justice.nsw.gov.au/)



## THE BELL SHAKESPEARE

Since 2010 The Bell Shakespeare, Australia's national theatre specialising in Shakespeare, has run an annual series of workshops at Juvenile Justice Centres in NSW, aimed at helping young detainees build self-confidence and find their voice. The program for Baxter usually begins with a one-hour performance of *Macbeth* by professional actors in the centre's gymnasium. For some of the audience, this is the first live show they have ever seen, and certainly most have never encountered Shakespeare before.

In 2015, Bell Shakespeare undertook an ambitious extension to this program. They rehearsed and produced an abridged version of *Macbeth*, completely performed by the young men of Baxter. Under the guidance of the experienced Bell Shakespeare educators, the participants attended a number of workshops, where they learnt the basics of the language and acting technique, working towards a performance for the entire centre and more importantly, for their friends and family. For the young men, it provided a huge creative challenge and a positive outlet for their energy, as well as a significant learning and emotional experience.

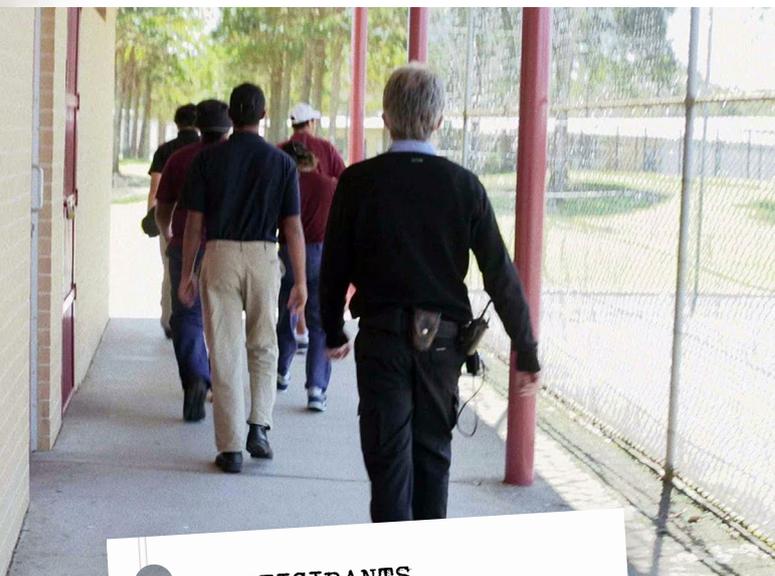
\* Recommended link

Bell Shakespeare

<https://www.bellshakespeare.com.au/>

### PARTICIPANTS

- JAMES EVANS
- HUW MCKINNON
- CRAIG DERWIN
- ANNA-WILI HIGHFIELD
- CARBS
- COSI
- DANGA
- FIT
- HAMILTON
- MULLET
- THE OTHER GUY



# WHAT IS JUVENILE JUSTICE?

In Australia, young offenders (those aged 10-16 years in Queensland and 10-17 years in all other Australian jurisdictions) are dealt with separately from adult offenders.

Juveniles commit more property than violent crimes, and generally commit less serious crimes such as graffiti, vandalism, shoplifting, fare evasion, motor vehicle theft, unlawful entry and road traffic offences.

The juvenile justice system focuses on the safety of the community and diverting young people away from further crime. It supervises young people on court orders in the community and manages young people in juvenile justice centres.

Juvenile justice services promote opportunities for rehabilitation. A range of measures have been introduced to divert young offenders away from committing further offences and the criminal justice system. These measures include:

- Youth justice conferences
- Cautions
- Fines
- Probation orders
- Community service work
- A suspended control order

A control order is a custodial sentence served in a juvenile detention centre. Control orders and time in custody are considered to be the most extreme form of sentencing for young offenders, and will generally be given when other options have been exhausted, or for extremely severe offences.

A juvenile justice centre is a facility for young people who have been found guilty of serious criminal offences. At juvenile justice centres, inmates are grouped according to age and gender and they undergo a variety of counselling and rehabilitative programs aimed at helping them reduce their likelihood of reoffending on release.

## RECOMMENDED LINKS

Students should become familiar with juvenile justice particular to their Australian state or territory. Links have been provided to government departments responsible for the administration of juvenile justice and to information that provides students with an insight into the state or territory's administration of juvenile justice.

### Australian Capital Territory

- ACT Government: Community Services – Child and Youth Protection Services  
<http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs/child-and-youth-protection-services>

### New South Wales

- NSW Government Justice: Juvenile Justice  
[www.juvenile.justice.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.juvenile.justice.nsw.gov.au/)

### Northern Territory

- Northern Territory Government: Territory Families – Youth Justice  
<https://territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au/youth-justice>

### Queensland

- Queensland Government

Department of Justice and Attorney-General: Youth Justice  
<http://www.justice.qld.gov.au/corporate/business-areas/youth-justice>

- Queensland Government: Young offenders and the justice system  
<https://www.qld.gov.au/law/sentencing-prisons-and-probation/young-offenders-and-the-justice-system>

### South Australia

- Government of South Australia: Department for Communities and Social Inclusion – Youth Justice  
<http://www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/agencies/youth-justice>
- Government of South Australia: Commissioner for Victims' Rights – Juvenile Justice  
<http://www.voc.sa.gov.au/juvenile-justice>

### Tasmania

- Tasmanian Government: Department of Health and Human Services – Young People  
<http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/youth/>

### youth\_justice

### Victoria

- Victorian Government: Justice and Regulation – Youth Justice  
<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/justice+system/youth+justice/>
- Victorian Government: Human Services – Youth Justice in Victoria  
[http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/660413/Youth-Justice-in-Victoria-fact-sheet-2013.pdf](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/660413/Youth-Justice-in-Victoria-fact-sheet-2013.pdf)

### Western Australia

- Government of Western Australia: Department of Justice – Youth Justice  
<http://www.correctiveservices.wa.gov.au/youth-justice/default.aspx>
- Government of Western Australia: Department of Corrective Services – Youth Justice Framework 2015 – 2018  
[https://www.correctiveservices.wa.gov.au/\\_files/youth-justice/yjs-framework-2015-2018.pdf](https://www.correctiveservices.wa.gov.au/_files/youth-justice/yjs-framework-2015-2018.pdf)



## MACBETH

'If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me without my stir.' – *Macbeth*

Historical sources suggest that Shakespeare's tragedy *Macbeth* was first performed between 1599 and 1606. The play was most likely written during the reign of **James I**. James was a patron of Shakespeare's acting company, and of all the plays Shakespeare wrote during James's reign, *Macbeth* most clearly reflects the playwright's relationship with the sovereign.

The earliest account of a performance of *Macbeth* is 1606 at the Globe Theatre. The text was first printed in 1623. Set in Scotland, the play illustrates the damaging physical and psychological effects of political ambition on those who seek power for its own sake.

Shakespeare's source for the tragedy is the account of Macbeth, King of Scotland, in *Holinshed's Chronicles* published first in 1577 and again in 1587. *Holinshed's Chronicles* was a history of England, Scotland, and Ireland familiar to Shakespeare and his contemporaries. The real Macbeth took the throne of Scotland in 1040, after killing his cousin King Duncan I. Duncan's eldest son, Malcolm, ended Macbeth's reign in 1057 by killing him in battle and later assuming the throne as Malcolm III. Another of Holinshed's Scottish narratives concerns the murder of King Duff by Donwald.

\* Recommended link

No Fear Shakespeare - *Macbeth*  
<http://nfs.sparknotes.com/macbeth/>



## BEFORE VIEWING

- Have you ever read a poem or a play written by Shakespeare?  
Why do you think Shakespeare's plays are still read and performed today?
- Have you ever seen a production of a Shakespeare play?  
Have you ever seen a Bell Shakespeare performance?
- What is juvenile justice?  
What is a juvenile justice centre?
- What is rehabilitation?  
What are the objectives of rehabilitation for young offenders?  
Is detention a type of rehabilitation?  
What types of rehabilitation programs in juvenile justice centres?

## CLOSE ANALYSIS

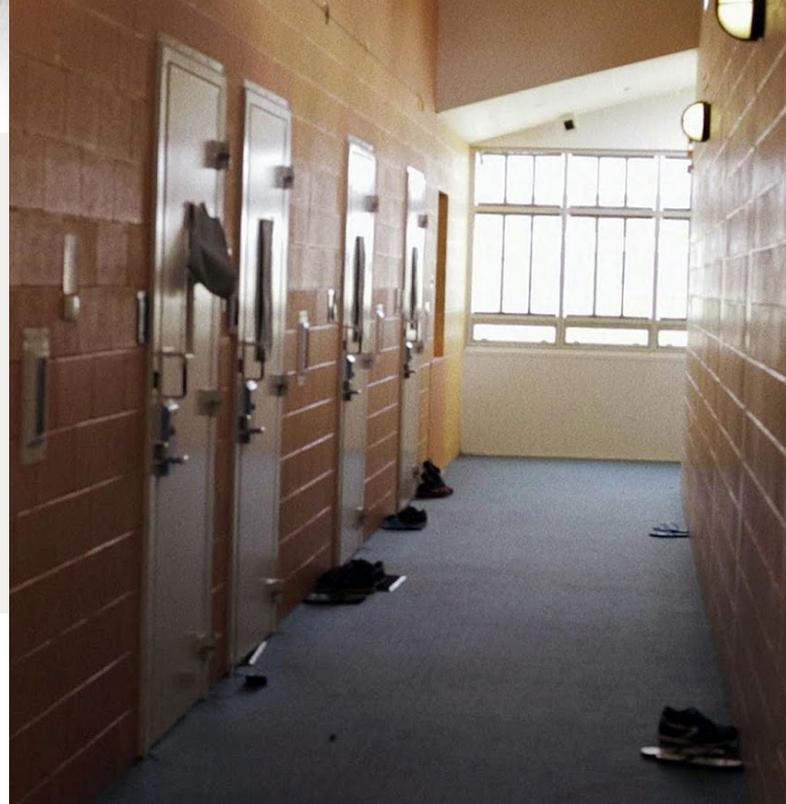
AS YOU WATCH *KINGS OF BAXTER* MAKE A VIEWING TIMELINE. JAMES AND HUW FROM BELL SHAKESPEARE VISIT FRANK BAXTER JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTRE TWICE A WEEK ON TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS FOR TWELVE WEEKS. THE TIMELINE SHOULD PROVIDE A SUMMARY OF WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE TWELVE-WEEK PROGRAM. LIKE *KINGS OF BAXTER*, THE TIMELINE SHOULD COUNTDOWN FROM THE FIRST WEEK OF THE PROGRAM TO THE PERFORMANCE.

### THERE'S YOUR DAY

00:01:05 – 00:02:34

*Kings of Baxter* introduces the young men who are the subjects of the documentary by having them describe life in Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre.

- What do you see? Aside from the participant's voices, what do you hear?
- While you watched this sequence, what did you think? How did you feel?
- 'You just do the same thing every day.'  
'Wake up, I think it's 6:30.'  
'The lights just flash on and stuff and the fan starts going so it just wakes you up.'  
'And then I go up and get medication.'  
'I'll go up and get me meds and stuff like that.'  
'Make your bed, you know, go out for breakfast.'  
'Go to school at 8:30, have fruit break at 10 o'clock.'  
'If you don't go to school you stay on the unit. Clean up the toilets or something.'  
'Have lunch, come in here half an hour, go back to school another hour and a half.'  
'And after lunch, we get locked down for two hours until the schoolboys come back.'  
'Finish school, come back, get your laundry and that, come back here and you fold it up.'  
'We're locked down at 8:30, then, either watch TV, do some work, write letters.'  
'Just make yourself tired so you can have a good sleep and stuff.'  
'Just watch TV, until the TVs turn off.'  
'And sleep. There's your day'  
'Same day tomorrow.'  
'Every day. Just a repeat'  
What do the young men's descriptions reveal about life in a juvenile justice centre?  
Describe the way this sequence is edited. Why do you think the filmmakers decided to edit the sequence in this way?
- As you watch *Kings of Baxter*, make notes about how the documentary portrays Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre. When you have finished making the notes write a description of Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre.



### FIRST DAY'S SHAKY

00:02:40 – 00:06:15

James and Huw from Bell Shakespeare make their way to Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre for their first session. James admits that he is feeling apprehensive,

'Well we're hoping for twelve boys to turn up. It's twice a week for three months, so it's a pretty tall ask. But also we can't have any preconceived ideas about these boys walking in. We just have to adapt to whatever's in front of us on the day.'

James and Huw sign in, surrender their belongings and head to the first workshop.

- James: We've got plenty of time to work it. James feels time is on their side. Are there times during the project when he thinks otherwise? Why?
- Craig: You know usually the first day's a bit shaky. Craig Derwin is the program manager at Baxter. How does *Kings of Baxter* portray him and his role at Baxter?  
Why do you think Craig offers the men this reality check?

There are chest bumps and handshakes at the end of the first workshop. James admits, 'We're acting a lot harder and tougher than we actually are. Huw agrees.

- Writing as either James or Huw, write an evaluation of Day 1.



## DANGA

00:06:54 – 00:08:55

Danga is one of the young men who participate in the Bell Shakespeare program.

Danga shares his story with the audience. The filmmakers use the setting of Danga's room to portray Danga and his life in Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre. In this sequence the audience of *Kings of Baxter* watch Danga participating in Bell Shakespeare rehearsals.

- Danga: I've done some stupid shit but, it's in the past now, can't do nothing about it. I wish I could take it back, you know, but unfortunately I can't. What does Danga choose to tell the audience about himself?

How does the setting of Danga's room add to the audience's understanding of who he is?

- Huw: Danga's intriguing, dude, like, he's charming and he's charismatic and he turns up on time and he makes you think he's super enthusiastic but when it comes to crunch he's really, he's on the sidelines a lot. And if you want him to get involved, you've really got figure out what's in it for him.

Danga: I just go there for a laugh cuz, straight out. I think it's funny, straight out. It's fun, and it gets me off the unit. I'll do whatever I can to get off this unit, bro.

Describe Danga's participation in the rehearsal featured in this sequence.

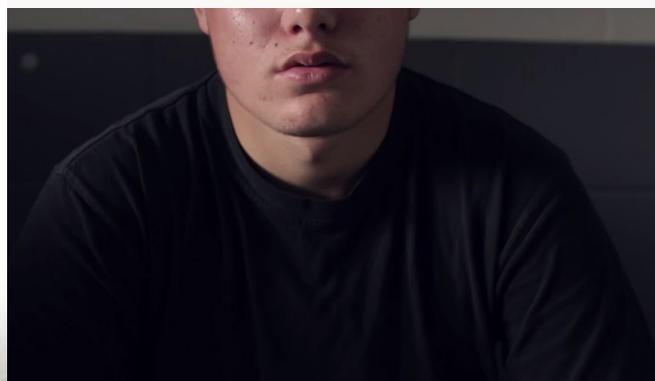
Drawing on the selected dialogue, footage of other rehearsals and the performance of *Macbeth*, discuss Danga's commitment to the program.

## I THINK MACBETH HAS GOT IT ALL

00:08:56 – 00:10:27

James and Huw arrive at Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre to find that half of the participants from Day One have dropped out of the program. They are uncertain of why this is the case.

- James: I think *Macbeth* has got it all for these guys. Blood and guts and violence and romance and death. And it's above all, about a man who is trying to decide between right and wrong. It's someone who is grappling with his conscience and then dealing with the consequences of his actions. Then what the boys can see through that, is they can start to reflect on their own actions and the consequences that they might have. Not just on themselves but on other people as well. Why Shakespeare? Do you think *Macbeth* is an appropriate play for the young men to perform? How do James and Huw support the young men to connect with the play?
- What happens in the workshop featured in this sequence?
- Explain the significance of the shots of life in Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre outside of the Bell Shakespeare workshop.
- As you watch *Kings of Baxter*, make notes about James and Huw as educators and as male role models for the young men.





## THE OTHER GUY

00:12:18 – 00:15:28

The Other Guy is one of the young men who participate in the Bell Shakespeare program.

The Other Guy shares his story with the audience. The filmmakers use the setting of The Other Guy's room to portray The Other Guy and his life in Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre. In this sequence the audience of *Kings of Baxter* watch The Other Guy participating in Bell Shakespeare rehearsals.

- The Other Guy: I've been in and out, missed about four Christmases, four birthdays. Ice, cannabis, LSD, stuff like that. It's mostly ice. You can't really run away from drugs where I come from, where I hang around anyways, just 'cause everyone's just on it and stuff like that. Pretty much life, I reckon, for us, anyways, in and out, and, do crime for money and stuff like that. Drugs. It's pretty shit actually, but money runs the world I guess.  
What does The Other Guy choose to tell the audience about himself?  
How does the setting of The Other Guy's room add to the audience's understanding of who he is?
- James: The Other Guy is an interesting bloke. He struggles with the reading which is not uncommon in here but when we throw a physical activity at him, he just jumps in boots and all. He'll throw himself around the room and really get involved.  
Describe The Other Guy's participation in the rehearsal featured in this sequence.  
Drawing on the selected dialogue, footage of other rehearsals and the performance of *Macbeth*, discuss The Other Guy's commitment to the program.

## THREE BROTHERS AND A TEACHER

00:10:27 – 00:11:49

With ten weeks until the performance, James acknowledges that the participant 'numbers are steadily diminishing'. The rehearsal continues even though there are only three willing actors, this time focusing on the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

- James: Our workshop is not necessarily a stable population. Boys come and go. They might be transferred to another juvenile detention centre, to adult prison. They might have a court date. They might have a date with their psychologist. A medical appointment. They might have been written up and been confined to their room. They might be in the slot for up to twenty-four hours for doing something who knows what. So all sorts of things conspire to change the group that walks in the door from day to day.  
What are the challenges of working in a juvenile justice centre for James and Huw?

## WHERE ARE THOSE DUDES FROM TUESDAY?

00:15:32 – 00:16:42

Huw and James find themselves in the rehearsal room on their own. They head outside to the courts.

- Huw and James could have just stayed in the rehearsal room on their own, waiting for one of the young men to turn up.  
Why do you think they go outside?  
What explanations do the boys offer for no one showing up?  
What explanations does Craig Derwin, Program Manager at Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre, offer?
- What does Huw's decision to join in the basketball game reveal about his understanding of how best to implement the program?
- James: Looks like we've got some of the boys back from Tuesday and then some completely new and we haven't seen at all for the last three weeks. So, you know, let's start from scratch and see what happens.  
What does James' comment reveal about his understanding of how best to implement the program?

## COSI

00:16:45 – 00:19:45

Cosi is one of the young men who participate in the Bell Shakespeare program.

Cosi shares his story with the audience. The filmmakers use the setting of Cosi's room to portray Cosi and his life in Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre. In this sequence the audience of *Kings of Baxter* watch Cosi participating in Bell Shakespeare rehearsals. Cosi is also shown training a disability assistance dog and completing his Year 12 artwork in a classroom.

- Cosi: My goal is to go to university when I get out. What does Cosi choose to tell the audience about himself?  
How does the setting of Cosi's room add to the audience's understanding of who he is?  
What does Cosi's involvement in other rehabilitation programs suggest about who he is and who he wants to become?
- Huw: Thank God for Cosi, man. He's the kind of guy, he's the kind of energy you want in the room because when he walks in everyone else responds and just sort of lifts their game a little bit, you know. It's awesome. Describe Cosi's participation in the rehearsal featured in this sequence.  
Drawing on the selected dialogue, footage of other rehearsals and the performance of *Macbeth*, discuss Cosi's commitment to the program.

## YOU ALL HAVE TO COME BACK ON TUESDAY

00:19:45 – 00:20:54

In this short sequence, Huw explains a scene from *Macbeth*.

- Describe the performance that Huw is able to elicit from the young men in this rehearsal.
- At end of the rehearsal, Huw reminds the young men that they all have to come back on Tuesday. Why is it important for the boys to show up?

## FIT

00:21:41 – 00:24:15

Fit is one of the young men who participate in the Bell Shakespeare program.

Fit shares his story with the audience. The filmmakers use the setting of Fit's room to portray Fit and his life in Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre. In this sequence the audience of *Kings of Baxter* watch Fit participating in Bell

Shakespeare rehearsals. Fit is also shown working in the laundry.

- Fit: You get used to it but and then you start getting depressed and that. Like missing your family, because you're away from your family every day, all day. Every time you get a visit, it just feels weird seeing your mum and that, you know? Just don't feel the same, you know? You feel like you're nobody now.  
What does Fit choose to tell the audience about himself?  
How does the setting of Fit's room add to the audience's understanding of who he is?
- Fit: When they said do you want to do it I said yeah straight away. I really like it, you know? Like we're all coming together and that, all different nashes and that. It's good.  
Describe Fit's participation in the rehearsal featured in this sequence.  
Drawing on the selected dialogue, footage of other rehearsals and the performance of *Macbeth*, discuss Fit's commitment to the program.



## DO YOU WANT US TO TELL A STORY?

00:25:10 – 00:27:08

When the boys arrive for another rehearsal, Carbs asks if he can tell the story of *Macbeth*. The other boys join in.

- Carbs: Macbeth comes in and, the weird sisters come out, you know, come out of the blue and tell his fortune, and he's spinning out.  
Boy: They say he's going to be king, and he believes them.  
Mullet: Yeah and Banquo was like a bit like a bit iffy on it.  
Cosi: He was a great warrior before that, you know? Everyone respected him. He had everything he wanted so I don't know why he wanted to be king and that.  
Boy: When the king announces the next person to be in line is his son, and he just shatters, and then he just kills the king.  
Cosi: He doesn't really want to do it, like his wife Lady Macbeth persuades him.  
Mullet: She only done it, because she wanted to be queen.  
Hamilton: She wants him to be powerful, but then when the going gets tough she kills herself. Oh well we don't know that but I reckon she killed herself.  
Mullet: If he never met the witches, like, she wouldn't have thought: 'Yeah, I'm gonna be queen ra ra ra and kill this guy'.  
Carbs: She tries to rule the country and tries to own it, and, he turns bad, you know?  
Mullet: yeah, it just goes all pear shaped.  
The Other Guy: Ross gives Macduff bad news about his family getting slaughtered, and his kids and his servants.  
Mullet: He shouldn't have killed everyone and then the whole family and his best friend, who does that? Like he was messed up.  
Hamilton: I wouldn't do it, kill people's families just to be king. I don't think I'm that power crazy.  
Cosi: And once he kills one, and he'll never stop.  
Carbs: The good fellas always win so he got killed at the end.  
Cosi: I don't think he deserves forgiveness.  
Fit: Yeah, I reckon it's karma. I believe in karma.  
Explain the significance of the young men's collective storytelling. What does this sequence reveal about the impact of the Bell Shakespeare program?



## CARBS

00:27:10 – 00:29:25

Carbs is one of the young men who participate in the Bell Shakespeare program.

Carbs shares his story with the audience. The filmmakers use the setting of the art classroom to portray Carbs and his life in Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre. In this sequence the audience of *Kings of Baxter* watch Carbs participating in Bell Shakespeare rehearsals.

- Carbs: I grew up near the beach so the turtles and the fish. It's about Dreamtime and stuff, you connect back at home too when you are far away. I'll probably give it to my sister, she was the only one who was with me when we all got separated. We're really close. So I just want to give her this for a gift, so she remembers me and stuff.  
What does Carbs choose to tell the audience about himself?  
How does the setting of Carb's room add to the audience's understanding of who he is?
- Carbs: Go to sleep, bang, youse are smashed. You're in this, bro, you're like that.  
Huw: Carbs has sort of decided, you know, who is going to be who and they've – and what's more is pretty much all of them sort of jumped in. Like when he says come and do this they're like "Yeah, okay", they just get up without really even thinking about it.  
Describe Carb's participation in the rehearsal featured in this sequence.  
Drawing on the selected dialogue and the footage of other rehearsals, discuss Carb's commitment to the program.

While Carbs' early release is good news, with only three weeks to the performance, he will be missed, especially by James and Huw.

- Carbs: Like I'm proud to be an Aboriginal boy, and I was starting to think about myself like, I need to stop coming into places like this. See I've got a lot for me when I get out this time and hopefully I stay out.  
How does Carbs see his future? How did you feel when you watched this scene? What did you think?





### LET'S DO IT AGAIN

00:29:28 – 00:30:39

With only five weeks until the performance, Huw encourages the young men 'to make something strong' and to 'bring something of themselves to it'.

- Huw: Just cause it's Shakespeare and the words are weird doesn't mean you have to treat it like you're having tea at your nana's house, ok? It is what you make of it. If you're worried about doing it in front of people, make it something you want to do in front of people. Is it understandable that the young men are nervous about the performance? How does Huw encourage the young men to view their contribution to the performance?
- What does Huw mean when he says 'there's a lot of self-control going on'? What challenge does this pose for Huw and James?

### WHAT WE HAVE IS UNDYING OPTIMISM

00:31:02 – 00:31:39

James and Huw discuss what they have to show after eight weeks of rehearsals. When James decides 'there's something', Huw clarifies that what they have is 'undying optimism'.

- What is James and Huw's game plan? How long does their game plan last? What does the footage suggest about how they respond to the reality of starting from scratch, again?
- How does this sequence shape the audience's understanding of James and Huw's relationship?

### HAMILTON

00:31:54 – 00:34:51

Hamilton is one of the young men who participate in the Bell Shakespeare program.

Hamilton shares his story with the audience. The filmmakers use the setting of Hamilton's room to portray Hamilton and his life in Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre. In this sequence the audience of *Kings of Baxter* watch Hamilton participating in Bell Shakespeare rehearsals.

- Hamilton: I've got a heaps addictive personality. I hyperfocus on shit. Like a lot. I was pretty addicted to 'The Bachelor'. I deadset thought Lana was gonna get it. I dunno what Sam was thinking!  
What does Hamilton choose to tell the audience about himself?  
How does the setting of Hamilton's room add to the audience's understanding of who he is?
- James: This can be a place where to stick your neck out might attract ridicule or bullying but here we have a guy Hamilton who's not afraid to goof around. He jumps in plays Lady Macbeth, has fun with a female character and everyone was laughing.  
Describe Hamilton's participation in the rehearsal featured in this sequence.  
Drawing on the selected dialogue, footage of other rehearsals and the performance of *Macbeth*, discuss Hamilton's commitment to the program.

## LET'S MAKE A PLAN FOR THESE TIM TAMS

00:35:40 – 00:38:57

Tim Tams are the linchpin of each rehearsal. With the performance not far away, James and Huw arrive laden with Tim Tams and hopeful that they will get the best out of the cast. They discuss what could possibly go wrong:

Huw: Verified story of sort of shocking violence that we've heard in this centre took place in this very room when a religious group, I don't know if it was Father Ramsey or somebody else, but apparently a religious group brought in and started distributing Tim Tams and the myth has it that some boy got three Tim Tams as opposed to two or two as opposed to one or something and the shit hit the fan.

James: There was blood.

- More than just a chocolate biscuit, the Tim Tams are a recurring motif in *Kings of Baxter*. What do the Tim Tams represent?

## MULLET

00:39:50 – 00:42:20

Mullet is one of the young men who participate in the Bell Shakespeare program.

Mullet shares his story with the audience. The filmmakers use the setting of Mullet's room to portray Mullet and his life in Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre. In this sequence the audience of *Kings of Baxter* watch Mullet participating in Bell Shakespeare rehearsals.

- Mullet: If I just sit here and think, just like what I could be doing on the outside right now. I just look at the trees moving in the wind and stuff. I'd probably just be eating some Hungry Jack's or Subway. To be honest, or hanging with my mates or girlfriend. What does Mullet choose to tell the audience about



## THE POINT IS

00:38:59 – 00:39:49

James and Huw make the decision not to have one boy play one part but rather for multiple boys to play multiple parts.

- James: Maybe it won't make complete sense to an audience. Maybe it will. Maybe it will be great. Maybe it will be terrible, I don't know. But that's not the point. The point is that they are giving something a go. That they're standing up and supporting each other, working as a team and achieving something they never thought they could achieve. Spend time as a class discussing James and Huw's decision. Why do they think it is wise decision? Drawing on the footage of the performance, describe the impact of this decision on the quality of the performance.

himself?

How does the setting of Mullet's room add to the audience's understanding of who he is?

- Mullet: Hath and stuff like that and hark and this and that aye, I didn't know what they were. I thought I was reading it wrong at first. They're just words from ages ago. Describe Mullet's participation in the rehearsal featured in this sequence. Drawing on the selected dialogue, footage of other rehearsals and the performance of *Macbeth*, discuss Mullet's commitment to the program. What happens when Mullet tells James and Huw what he has to do is embarrassing?



## MASK MAKING

00:42:21 – 00:43:52

Due to the cast's apprehension about performing in front of an audience a decision is made to wear masks. James explains,

'The main idea behind using the masks would be to give the boys a kind of freedom that they wouldn't otherwise have if they were so exposed.'

Artist Anna-Wili Highfield runs the mask making workshop with the boys.

- What does the footage of the young men making the masks reveal about the significance of the workshop? Is it just about making masks?
- How does the young men's relationship with the camera shift in this sequence?

## BUT I CAN'T DO IT

00:43:53 – 00:48:11

With only two rehearsals until the performance, James and Huw do all they can to convince the boys to remain committed to the project.

- James: Guys, we've only got two more days, let's try and get it as good as we can.  
Huw: What do you mean you're finished, man? Are you coming next Thursday?  
Hamilton: ...like they've got a lot of balls coming in here.  
How do James and Huw affirm the young men in this sequence? Why do they continue to push the young men beyond their comfort zone?

## HUW AT HOME AND JAMES AT HOME

00:48:13 – 00:48:58 & 00:55:08 – 00:55:16  
& 00:55:16 – 00:55:51

- Huw: You know, you think you've had difficult workshops or difficult residencies in schools or whatever and then you do this and sometimes and I know James tells me not to worry about this I guess I feel like the end result won't reflect what I feel like I've put in.  
James: I'm not expecting it to be you know the greatest performance of all time. I don't think that was ever the point. I'm just hoping they will have gotten to a place which they never thought they could achieve in the beginning of the process that's all I hope.  
What is achieved by showing Huw and James at home with their families?  
Compare the sequences set at Huw and James' homes with the sequence showing the boys in their rooms on the eve of the performance.

## IT'S TOO MUCH BRO

00:49:00 – 00:51:45

With only one week to performance, Mullet is feeling very uncertain about seeing the project through to the end.

- Mullet: All we are doing is the same thing every day. Why is it suddenly too much for Mullet? How does James respond to Mullet's stage fright? How does Huw tackle the situation? What is the outcome?





## THE FINAL REHEARSAL

00:51:47 – 00:55:07

After a gruelling twelve weeks, the young men arrive for their final rehearsal. second last day with the boys.

- How are Huw and James feeling about finishing up? What are they going to miss?
- How does the rehearsal go? James asks the cast if the show is ready. How do they respond?
- Writing as either James or Huw, write an evaluation of the final workshop.

## ONE, TWO, THREE, SHAKESPEARE

00:55:54 – 01:04:29

This sequence features footage shot before, during and after the performance. As the audience gathers in the gym, the cast find it difficult to control their nerves. Mullet even vomits from anxiety. Despite their fears of failure, of being laughed at, of forgetting their lines, the performance begins and is a great success. At the after party, the young men are congratulated by friends and family and their achievement is acknowledged by James and Huw. Cosi takes the opportunity to thank James and Huw,

‘You know, they always believed in us you know? All the boys were all nervous and that and they didn’t really want to do it but they always believed in us that we could do it and yeah, thank you.’

- Mullet: It’s the first time I’ve ever done something like this.  
Danga: If someone’s going to chicken out today, it’s

going to waste our time. It’s gonna make everyone angry. If you’re just gonna muck around, then don’t come ey? They’re only coming for the Tim Tams, you know?

Cosi: Yeah, I was quite nervous in the morning. But I feel pretty good. Yeah, I have confidence I can do it.

The Other Guy: The audience is just gonna I reckon freak us out a little bit.

Huw: I really wanted to tell them that I think they’re brave and that they’ve got balls of steel but also I didn’t want to make them feel that they were doing something that required balls of steel.

James: Each and every one of you have done an amazing job.

Are Huw and James nervous? How do they respond to the cast’s pre-show nerves? How do the cast support each other pre-show?

- What did you think and how did you feel as you watched the performance?
- What does the footage of the audience reveal about the importance of the performance?
- Other Guy: I was pretty shy at the start like, I didn’t really wanna act but, I just done it because, gets me tie over and done with. It gives us confidence probably in our life probably, yeah. About acting and stuff like that, talking in front of people.

Danga: Struggled a little bit you know, in front of the crowd and that, but it’s all about fun, you know, and trying different things.

Hamilton: I regret not getting my family to come in. Would have been good having them here. Seeing what I can do. I’m finally using my voice for something half meaningful.

Mullet: I did an alright job. Not the best but I tried my best. I vomited beforehand bro.

Fit: Yeah I know, my mum just loved it hey, yeah my girlfriend and that. Mum went home bragging to my other brothers and that, saying how good I want and

that. When I went back to unit they was all calling me like saying 'oh good act' you know Macbeth, calling me Macbeth. That's what they call me in the unit now. Some of the boys said they might do it next time, too, if it happens again.

Cosi: The boys and that in my unit are saying that I was the best one. They're saying 'You're the only one who knew all your lines' and that, that's what they were saying to me but. I didn't think they would like it, I think they would tease me and that but they didn't. So yeah, great relief.

Cosi: You know, it made me feel good about myself and that. Like I used to be a criminal but now I know like, people care about me they say good things about me.

What do the young men's reflections reveal about the value of the program?

How have the young men been changed by their involvement in the program?

- James speaks optimistically about the long term outcomes of the program for the participants, 'Who knows what the long term outcome of this program is going to be but what I'm hoping is that they can take some of the skills they've learnt here and apply it in their life. So perhaps if they're a bit more confident in that job interview or a bit more confident getting that rental property a few years down the track then this program has had its intended effect.'
- Like James, do you feel optimistic about the impact the program will have on the young men's futures?
- Having watched *Kings of Baxter*, has your attitude to youth offenders changed?

## ONE YEAR LATER...

01:04:37 – 01:05:18

James and Huw return to Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre to rehearse Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

- James: I'm pretty optimistic at this point but you never know...  
Huw: ...but Day One is full of potential.  
Given all that we have witnessed, were you surprised by James and Huw return to Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre to start all over again?
- *Kings of Baxter* finishes with the following postscript: 'Bell Shakespeare is trialling the program in Victoria. They plan to run theatre workshops with juvenile offenders in every state in Australia.'  
Why is the program important? In your answer acknowledge each of the stakeholders by explaining why the program is important to:
  - the young men;
  - Huw and James;
  - Bell Shakespeare;
  - Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre.

### CREDITS

*Kings of Baxter* is a Grumpy Sailor Production.

<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Jack Yabsley
<b>PRODUCER</b>	Claire Yvonne Evans
<b>EXECUTIVE PRODUCER</b>	Susan MacKinnon
<b>CINEMATOGRAPHY</b>	Joshua Glenn Heath
<b>EDITED</b>	Pete Ward, Lindi Harrison
<b>ORIGINAL SCORE</b>	Hylton Mowday
<b>SOUND DESIGN</b>	Andrew Stevenson
<b>DI COLOURIST</b>	Yanni Kronenberg

## AFTER VIEWING

### EXTENDED RESPONSES

- '*Kings of Baxter* challenges perceptions of youth offenders.' Discuss.
- '*Kings of Baxter* endorses that detention must be about rehabilitation rather than punishment.' Discuss.

### RESEARCH TASK 1.

Your task is to research the characteristics of youth offenders in Australia. Statistics about youth offenders can be found online. Drawing on your research, compile an infographic about youth offenders in Australia.

\* Recommended links:

[http://www.aic.gov.au/statistics/criminaljustice/juveniles\\_detention.html](http://www.aic.gov.au/statistics/criminaljustice/juveniles_detention.html)

<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/current%20series/tandi/401-420/tandi416.html>

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4519.0~2015-16~Main%20Features~Youth%20offenders~4>

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/youth-justice/youth-detention-population-in-australia-2016/contents/table-of-contents>

## RESEARCH TASK 2.

Danga: Some people think it's scary. Some don't. Like for me it's easy, you know? I guess because I've been in here for too long and that I know how to make it through. It's all a game, just started playing it. Stay off the workers, you know what I mean? Don't backchat. Just have respect.

Fit: It was my choice really, like I just grew up around crime and stuff, you know? Everyone around me, all my cousins, my brothers, all doing crime, you know? Since I was little I just kept seeing what they do, and thought that was alright to do, you know?

Carbs: The first couple of days I was fearing for my life, you know? I was like one and a half metres tall, you know? Coming in and meeting these big guys you know, twice the size of me, wider and everything. I had my hands clenched and all that shit, you know?

Hamilton: I don't mind the clothes but little stuff you take for granted on the outside, you want in here. Like it's so stupid but like. Being able to open my own doors. Have a proper toothbrush. Walking up stairs, I haven't done that for ages. I used to go to the beach heaps. I don't know I used to like smoking bongos I guess. I was pretty good at that.

Mullet: Yeah, I just done something I shouldn't have, obviously, that's why I'm in here. When I first got here, I'll admit like I was a bit scared, I thought this was the centre for all the big like, big hard-arse criminals and that, but when I got in here I knew most of them anyway so I was like, oh yeah, it's all good. First it started with me getting in trouble at school, now it's in trouble with the police and stuff, so, it's escalated a fair bit. I just had a trouble with listening but now like, I'm more mature and that so, I'm sweet with it, you know? Just go with the flow.

Use the above statements to initiate a discussion about life for the young men in Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre and the impact of detention on the young men.

Your task is to research youth detention in your state or territory. Youth are detained in juvenile justice centres, also known as youth detention centres due to their involvement, or alleged involvement, in crime.

Drawing on your research, prepare a multimedia report on youth detention in your state or territory

- Your report should provide facts and figures about youth detention and the youth detention population in

your state or territory.

- Your report should provide an evaluation of conditions in juvenile justice centres in your state or territory.
- Your report should offer three recommendations about how best to improve youth detention in your state or territory.

## RESEARCH TASK 3.

Current statistics show that youth offender rates in Australia are higher for males than females for every year of age. *Kings of Baxter* focuses on male youth offenders.

Your task is to research the gender differences in youth offenders in Australia and the influence of gender on sentencing decisions and detention. You may choose how to format the results of your investigation. You will be expected to share your final product with your peers.

### Media watch

Your task is to investigate the mainstream media's portrayal of the juvenile justice in Australia.

Work with a team of your peers to complete a comprehensive analysis of the mainstream media's portrayal of the juvenile justice in Australia. This includes reports and comment about the juvenile justice in Australia in print and online newspapers, and on television and radio.

**Task 1:** Use Wordle to make a word cloud of the language used in the headlines of the source material that you have collected. What does the Wordle reveal about the language that the media uses to portray juvenile justice?

**Task 2:** How does the media portray juvenile justice? Your answer to this question should consider how the media portrays youth offenders, juvenile justice services and juvenile justice centres.

**Task 3:** Is the media's portrayal of juvenile justice balanced? Is the media's portrayal of juvenile justice productive?

**Task 4:** Write a feature newspaper article or record a radio segment or film a television current affairs story about the issue of juvenile justice in Australia.

### Class forum

'THAT WE NEED TO RETHINK JUVENILE JUSTICE.'

Write a one-minute statement expressing your view in response to this contention. You will be expected to present your statement as part of a class forum.



Photos:  
the crew

## MAKING KINGS OF BAXTER

Students are advised to read Appendix 1: *Making Kings of Baxter* prior to completing the following tasks about the documentary. Spend time as a class, discussing the insights this statement provides about *Kings of Baxter* and about documentary filmmaking?

*Kings of Baxter* is an observational documentary filmed over the course of the twelve-week Bell Shakespeare program in Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre.

- *Kings of Baxter* is an observational documentary. What is an observational documentary? Have you watched other observational documentaries that are similar to *Kings of Baxter*? Spend time as a class, discussing other examples of this genre. What are the features of an observational documentary? Make a two-column chart. In the first column list the features you have named. In the second column use the content of *Kings of Baxter* to provide an example of each feature.
- What strategies do the filmmakers use to allow us to connect with the Bell Shakespeare educators James and Huw and with the young men involved in the program? How does *Kings of Baxter* use production elements to protect the identities of the young men? Do you think the presence of the production team and the cameras influenced the behaviour of the educators and the young men? Were you surprised by their willingness to be filmed?
- Working as a class, make a list of the likely challenges of making *Kings of Baxter*.
- Why do you think the documentary is titled *Kings of Baxter*?

## APPENDIX 1: MAKING KINGS OF BAXTER

While the film has taken years to come to fruition, the original idea came to us quite quickly. Jack and Claire had just finished up a collaboration with Bell Shakespeare and Google's Creative Lab, through Claire's company Grumpy Sailor. We were already in awe of Bell's work and their team, and so one night back in 2014 when Jack attended their education showcase and heard about the Juvenile Justice program, it was a no-brainer.

Bell Shakespeare are a very collaborative group of people and as we'd been lucky enough to work with them previously and had an established relationship, we simply reached out and expressed our intention to make the film; they received the idea very openly and assisted us in steps to move forward. We were all, initially, quite nervous about how we would deal with hiding the identity of the kids, as it is a strict condition in filming them, so in 2014 Bell Shakespeare allowed us to accompany them



to workshops where shot some test footage, and then edited a small piece. This process proved to both them and us that we could still tell a compelling story without revealing the boy's identities, particularly because of the energy of the Bell Shakespeare educators – James Evans (Associate Director, Bell Shakespeare) and Huw McKinnon (arts educator and actor).

Bell Shakespeare have been running programs in Juvenile Justice for years, and have established a great relationship with the centres. With that in mind, Juvenile Justice were incredibly open to making the film – particularly as it detailed a program that they see the ongoing value in. The test footage we shot was also a way to demonstrate to them how we would treat identity, and abide by their requirements that it would be obscured. We agreed to give them final approval of the film, going back and forth with levels of blurring and cropping until they were comfortable. All in all the process was incredibly smooth and the team at Juvenile Justice were great.

At a centre level, we had to go through the necessary inductions and have our gear approved every time we went in to film - we couldn't take in mobile phones, coins, keys etc. It was all very controlled. Over the twelve weeks at Frank Baxter we built a good relationship with the team there, which meant that we could move around fairly freely, though always accompanied, to get the footage we needed.

The need to obscure identity was definitely the biggest challenge in the making of the film. Jack, Claire and Joshua Heath (Director of Photography) spoke a lot upfront about how we would do this. We spoke of animation at one point, or employing techniques that were a little bit more abstract; when we shot the test footage, however, it was clear that the action in the room was really what we wanted to show, so we opted to use more of a tracked

blurring/shallow depth of field effect - in a way that was possibly more elegant than a full pixelation. There was a little bit of trial and error with our original test footage to get to where we got to; we worked with Yanni Kronenberg our Digital Intermediate Colourist for this. For interviews, we made the decision to crop faces to see mouths, so we would still connect the story we were hearing with the people telling them.

We shot the film over about 12 weeks, travelling from Sydney to Kariong on the Central Coast every Tuesday and Thursday for three months, and we were shooting for only a few hours each day. It was tough getting access at different times, not because the centre wouldn't facilitate it, but there were various things going on with the boys; at the centre they attend school, work, appointments etc. and we wouldn't know where anyone would be on a given day. A lot of it was played by ear – the team had to be very adaptable.

When we shot the film back in 2015, it was mostly speculative. We really just wanted to do it. It was a story we needed to tell. Part way through filming we were lucky enough to have Executive Producer Susan MacKinnon join the team, and it was thanks to her efforts and guidance that we received our first piece of funding through philanthropic donation which got us to rough cut, but honestly most of our funding only came through in the past 12 months. Foxtel coming on board to broadcast was really the thing that got us there. As with all films, a lot of time, effort and energy has been expended to make Kings of Baxter; three years after its inception it's great to be seeing it on the big screen at Antenna (Oct 12 2017) and on the small screen on Foxtel Arts (Oct 19 2017).

**Source: Press kit Kings of Baxter (2017)**



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