

rites of passage

Report to the Aboriginal Benefits Fund

Summary

Beyond Empathy received \$8000 from the Aboriginal Benefits Foundation for Beyond Empathy's youth film project Rites of Passage. This document will provide a report of what was achieved through this project in line with the funding proposal submitted to the Aboriginal benefits Foundation.



Money from the ABF was used to tour and screen the film Rites of Passage around Australia, and the aim was to benefit indigenous communities and individuals.

Rites of Passage was produced as part of a community project run by Beyond Empathy in the Illawarra between 2009 and 2013. More than 60 young people in the Illawarra acted as cast and crew for the making of the film. Over half of the participants are aboriginal. Four of the six main characters in the finished film are indigenous.

The cast and crew learnt technical skills in film-making and life skills. Activities undertaken while making the film include developing work readiness skills such as following directions, communication, working in a team, conflict resolution and being on time, and also skills to prepare the young people for study and learning opportunities.



The process of making the film and presenting it to their own and other communities has built confidence and leadership in the young people, broadening their horizons and raising their self worth, belief and capacity.

During the project the engagement with participants extended beyond artistic engagement, with the project workers providing 'reaching out' support to the young people to reduce their risky behaviours and to assist them with their journeys of creating change.

The Film

Rites of Passage is an 80 minute feature length drama film. This is a synopsis of the finished film:

Made with a message of hope, Rites of Passage is a raw, uncensored and honest film inspired by the life experiences of the young people involved in the making of this powerful feature-length drama. Six interwoven stories show these teenagers negotiating the dangers and discoveries of their age and because the cast were also the crew what emerges is a self portrait of resilient kids responding to the challenges surrounding them.

They might live in public housing and come from families that have seen disadvantage and hardship. But with frankness and courage, these young people have dipped below the surface of their often tough exteriors to reveal what's going on inside their lives.

For these young people, making the film became a rite of passage. The authenticity that these non-actors bring to the screen blurs the line between fact and fiction.

Mouthy kids who are always confronting teachers give voice to their stories through poetry, rebellious boys play with fire, skate boarders who video everything capture the violence next door, a family flees a father, a party becomes a dangerous place for two girls, a thief tries to rescue Christmas...

Every story in Rites of Passage is packed with emotion: anger, grief, love, fear, longing and courage. These teenagers who made this film show us their world in all its enormity and magic at the same time.



The film was entirely produced in the Illawarra by a small crew of paid Beyond Empathy workers, working collaboratively with the young people who were participants and a huge number of volunteers who assisted the production in a variety of ways including appearing as extras and playing roles in the film.

The project was supported by a wide alliance of community organisations including: Barnados, Community Centres, Headspace, Youth Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Services, Youth and Family Services etc. The credits of the film give a complete list.

Acknowledgement of ABF

ABF's logo appears in the end credits of Rites of Passage in a full page card that only includes the ABF logo. The ABF logo appears at the end of the trailer for the film in a card that acknowledges all the funding bodies for the project. The ABF logo is featured prominently (first) in the lower banner of every direct page on the Rites of Passage website www.ritesofpassagefilm.com.au and is also featured prominently on the contact page of the website alongside other logos. The ABF logo appears on the DVD artwork for the film. See below.



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RIES OF PASSAGE
a feature film made by young people whose lives are anything but ordinary

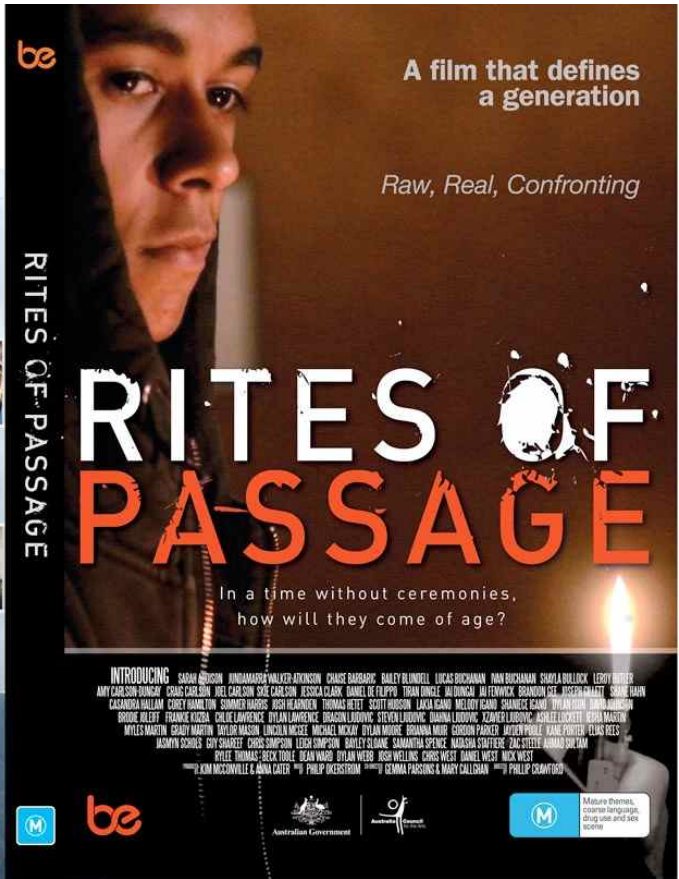
Made with a message of hope, Rites of Passage is a raw, uncensored and honest film inspired by the life experiences of the young people involved in the making of this powerful feature length drama. Directed by award-winning film-maker, Phillip Crawford, RITES OF PASSAGE is six interwoven stories showing the risk taking, disappointment, joys and love that comes with growing up.

Each of these participants has their own life. They might battle homelessness or alcohol abuse or drug addiction. They might live in public housing or come from families that have seen disadvantage or hardship. With frankness and courage, these young people have dived below the surface of their often tough exteriors to reveal what's going on inside.

Approximate Running Time: 86 Minutes
Language: English
Screen Ratio: 16:9
Audio: 5.1 Surround

CONNECT
- ritesofpassagefilm.com.au
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Logos: be, Australian Government, Gata, riskingsun, NSW, THE CALEDONIA Foundation, SOUND FIRM, DVD Video Classic, © Beyond Empathy Ltd 2013, M



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A film that defines a generation

Raw, Real, Confronting

RIES OF PASSAGE

In a time without ceremonies, how will they come of age?

INTRODUCING SASHAY ANDERSON, HIRIYANARASA WALKER-ATKINSON, CHANEZ BARBARIC, BAILEY BLUNDELL, LUCAS BUCHANAN, PAUL BUCHANAN, SHARLA BULLOCK, LEROY BUTLER, AMY CAROLINE BURTON, SUEEN CARLSON, NIEL CARLSON, ROSE CARLSON, WESSICA CLARK, DANIEL DE FLEPPIN, FRANK DINGEL, IRIDIANSI, HAFETHAWAN, SHANNON FEE, FRASER HAYES, SHANE HAYEN, CASANDRA HALLAM, COREY HAMILTON, SHANE HARRIS, JOSH HEARDEN, THOMAS HETZ, SCOTT HIGSON, LAIKA IGARD, MELBOY BRAND, SHANTEZ KAHN, THOMAS KING, THOMAS KING, BRODIE KALEIT, FRANKIE KOSZA, CHLOE LAWRENCE, TYLAN LAWRENCE, DRAGON LIUDOVIC, STEVEN LIUDOVIC, DIANA LIUDOVIC, ZYANER LIUDOVIC, ASHLEY LOCKETT, BEHA MARTIN, MYLES MARTIN, GRADY MARTIN, TAYLOR MASON, LINCOLN MCGEE, MICHAEL MCKAY, TYLAN MOORE, BROANNA MUIR, GORDON PARKER, ANDREW POLLE, KAREL PRZYBYL, FELIX REES, JACIMYN SCHLES, GUY SHARREFF, CHRIS SIMPSON, LESH SIMPSON, BARLEY SLEANE, SAMANTHA SPENCE, NAASHA STAFFERS, ZAC STEELE, ANAND SUKTHAM, PHILIP THOMAS, BECK TONLE, DEAN WARD, STELAN WEST, BISH WELLS, CHRIS WEST, DANIEL WEST, NICK WEST, RAKIM MCKENVILLE & ANJA CALER, PHILIP ANDERSTROM, DENNIA PASSINGS & HARRY CALLEHAN, PHILIP CRAWFORD

Logos: M, be, Australian Government, of, M, Mature themes, coarse language, drug use and sex scenes

ABF Funding Supports the Tour of the Film

There were 36 presentation of Rites of Passage nationally around Australia. These screenings were held at a variety of venues and occasions including cinema screenings, community centres universities, film festivals, conferences



Communities where screenings were held are: Bowraville, Hobart, Sydney, Melbourne, Gold Coast, Canberra, Mullumbimby, Armidale NSW, Penrith, Adelaide, Wollongong, Brisbane, Perth, Logan, Port Macquarie, Alice Springs, Coffs Harbour, Broken Hill, Shellharbour, Auburn, Parramatta, and Newcastle.



22 of the young people involved in making the film got to travel on a plane, stay in an apartment and host a screening of Rites of Passage.

Here are some responses from audience members about the film:

"It was a really honest film that really inspired me"

"I loved it. It struck a chord with me and made me think about teenagers from a different perspective"

"It made me cry and laugh"

"That's a really powerful film! If you are a teenager or you have a teenager, I recommend you go see it!"

"It felt like it wasn't even acting. So natural"

"I could relate to so much of this film. Most of the teenagers I know are like the ones in the film and most of our parents don't understand us. It showed how we feel really well"

“Rites of Passage: a profound movie – all about challenges and choices and opportunities. It makes you think about your life, your own adolescence and also the people you have an impact on. A must see!”

“It really drew me in! Made me think!”

“The stories are full of so much energy, so much heart. It comes through the film, and that’s magic!”



This is a breakdown of the audience and reach of Rites of Passage

The total audience for National Presentations i.e. the tour of the film was **7,345**

Add to that the audience for international screenings which was **1,760**

There were **4,698** views of the Rites of Passage films online.

And the total online presentations, which is made up of views of films and trailers combined was **46,118**.

The total audience for all Rites of Passage Presentations, which includes screenings, online viewings, conferences, workshops, trailers etc was **51,173**

The traditional media reach is estimated as **262,667** and made up of 15 Newspaper stories, 22 Radio Stories, 16 Online Stories, 2 Magazines. (based on researched estimates of Circulation, Ratings and Views)

The social media reach is estimate as **62,226**. There were 87 posts on Facebook in the 2013/14 period. The average reach per Facebook post is 716 with 254 of those organic or connected to people who have "Liked" Rites of Passage.

The total reach for Rites of Passage project which includes all the presentations and the Media Reach was **376,066**.

A Study Guide was produced by the Australian Teachers of Media to assist teachers to use the film in various educational and community settings. The link to the guide is:

www.metromagazine.com.au/studyguides/emailissue.asp?id=1054

Here are some comments by audience who have viewed the film online.

"Great work guys! This work of art could be 'local anywhere, Australia' - No victims here, a moment in the lives of our next generation."

"Great film, highly recommended! An insightful look into a part of Australia very close to home."

"One of the most inspiring films I've seen all year! This is a real life story I can relate to, told like it is, without pretences. Worth watching!!!!!!"

"All involved should be proud. Genuine depiction of real life in the suburbs for young People and their struggle to survive and gain opportunity. Fully support projects like this that give a voice to those who struggle."

"Yes! AND shame on you for using the very effective `Lassie Effect.'" No, actually I loved the whole thing. Very courageous, very honest, and as one fellow human to others: Very Inspiring!"

"Totally well shot and sequenced. Great stories, AND great camerawork/editing. Cannes International film festival--enter it!"

"This film is unlike anything else you have seen. You MUST attend!"

Film Festival Screenings and Awards

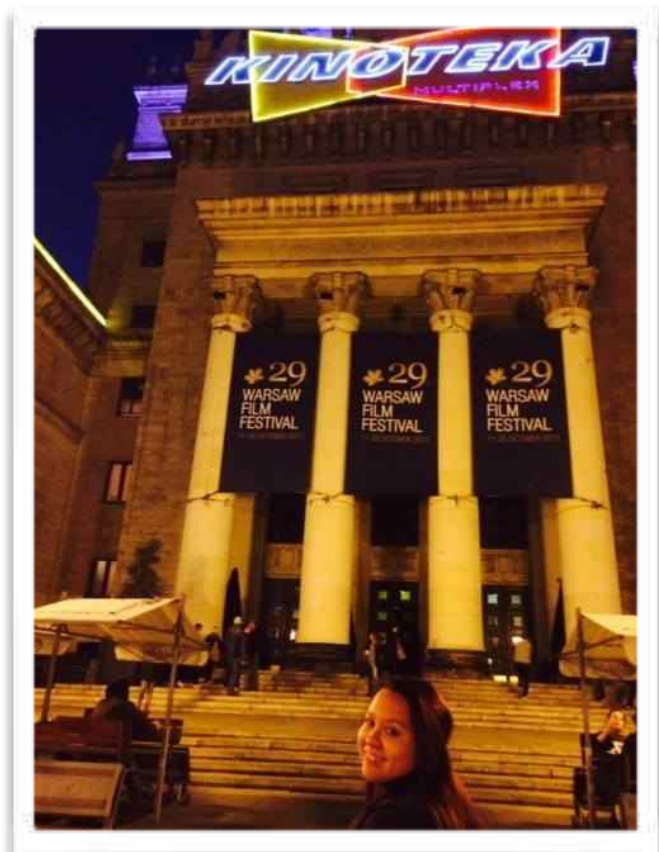
WINNER: Special Jury Mention:

Warsaw Film Festival

Free Spirit Competition

(for independent and rebellious films
from around the world)

Warsaw Film Festival is one of 14
events recognised by the International
Federation of Film Producers
Associations (www.fiapf.org) as
international competitive film festivals
– next to Cannes, Venice and Berlin.
Oct 2013



WINNER: BEST FILM

Auburn International Film Festival for Children and Young Adults
In Competition: Films Made by Adults for Children and Young Adults
Sept 2013 Auburn, Australia



Sao Paulo International Film Festival (Mostra)
In Competition New Filmmakers Competition
Oct 2013

WINNER: Best Editing: *Cyprus International Film Festival*
Golden Aphrodite Competition: First Feature Premieres, Oct 2013

Oulu International Film Festival for Children and Young People
In Competition
Nov 2013

Social Justice Film Festival
Seattle, USA, Oct 2013

Bolder Life Festival
Colorado, USA, Nov 2013

WINNER: People's Choice Award: *Bay Street Film Festival*
Thunder Bay, Canada, Sept 2013

WINNER: Best Director: First Feature
Colorado International Film Festival, Aug 2013

WINNER: Honorable Mention

International Film Awards Berlin, Aug 2013

Woods Hole Film Festival

In competition, August 2013, USA



Reviews and Quotes for the Film

“Directed and edited by Phillip Crawford, Rites of Passage is among the most remarkable and moving films produced in Australia in recent years. The freshness and spontaneity of the storytelling masks a disciplined cinematic technique in which seemingly random and disconnected episodes are brought together to form a satisfying whole.

It is an example of community filmmaking in the most literal sense. Credit for the finished work belongs principally to Phillip Crawford, but the film is essentially a co-operative enterprise involving scores of young people (and many older ones) in Wollongong’s southern suburbs, all of whom have shared in some way in the creative process as performers, extras or production assistants. The result is a picture of day-to-day life among a cross-section of Wollongong’s multicultural working-class community that has the unmistakable ring of authenticity. These youngsters aren’t following some pre-ordained script or contrived narrative; they are revealing their own lives in a film charged with truth and raw humanity.

The success of Rites of Passage owes much to a set of ten principles to which all participants were bound. They are enunciated on-screen at the start of the film and essentially have to do with ideals of sharing and co-operation, a rejection of elitism and a sense of equality among all those taking part. The result could easily have been muddled and unfocused. But the naturalism and honesty of the performers goes well with the stories they tell – the pains of family breakup, a boy’s love for his dog, the efforts of local teachers to instil in their charges an understanding of literature and a talent for self-expression. Visually striking in its mixture of colour and heavily-filtered black-and-white cinematography, film combines a sense of immediacy with a strange mood of timelessness. The final sequence is brilliantly suspenseful. Rites of Passage will not be easily forgotten.”

Evan Williams, film critic, The Australian

“Just a few minutes into the film, you start to care intensely about these kids, and the tension of how they will survive and get through becomes unbearable. But there’s always enough warmth and lightness to give you hope.

Somehow through the freshness of the filmmaking, you see their inner worlds lit up and the trials of being young and fragile under the tough masks the world makes them wear.

Millions of kids go through these painful rites of passage, just a few adults manage to care and guide them, often failing on the way, often doing harm as well as good. The film doesn’t soft shoe it, there is menace and ugliness here, but there is a way through. I think every young person, and every adult who watches it, will be lifted up and prompted to care more and do more so that we waste less young lives. “

Steve Biddulph, one of the world’s best loved parenting authors and educators. His books, including Secret of Happy Children, Raising Boys, The New Manhood and now RAISING GIRLS are in four million homes and 31 languages.”

“Rites of Passage is a feature drama set in the suburbs of the Illawarra in NSW. As the name suggests, the film is concerned with teenagers negotiating the dangers and discoveries of their age. It is a multi-character film exploring issues including schooling, romance, drugs and other crimes and misdemeanours, all set against a backdrop of imperfect families, many suffering the traumas of domestic violence. Six dramatic scenarios unfold in a

novel way, more resonating with each other than overlapping. Kids are initially just getting by, though often they triumph against the odds, too. For all the weighty themes, there is great delight and humour in these stories.

The filmmaking is superb with gorgeous imagery and audacious editing. All scenes were shot on more than one camera, giving rise to very stylish cinema. The many characters are quickly established through affecting performances that always ring with authenticity.

This beautiful movie is all the more impressive as the young cast also crewed the shoot. Guidelines were in place that required that the script come from the actors, that the locations used be in their neighbourhood and, fittingly, that the first screening be in the community. It had also wisely been resolved that should an actor fail to show up, the production would continue with necessary adjustments to the storyline. This model of filmmaking brings to mind British social realism mixed with Lars von Trier's Dogme 95. The project was auspiced by Beyond Empathy (BE), a group who, "Love art and hate disadvantage".

From this brilliant conception emerges a stylish self-portrait of resilient kids responding to the challenges surrounding them. Clearly, both the young people involved and their community have been transformed in the process of making this film and the viewer has to marvel at the breathtaking success of this inspired intervention. Rites of Passage is a uniquely rewarding movie experience highly recommended for teenagers and older.

Rating: 4 & ½ stars out of 5"

**Andrew Bunney, Let's Go To The Pictures,
Three D Radio, Adelaide**

"In the film Rites of Passage Australian youth tell the story of growing up. Themes of sex and violence, love and trust are inextricably intertwined. And whether Rites of Passage is a documentary or fiction, you'll have to decide for yourself.

It's a movie without a predetermined script, but made with ten commandments or principles that control the way the stories develop, the selection of actors, the shooting techniques and some less weighty matters (for example the ninth principle is that the end credits must be arranged in alphabetical order, without recognition for writers or key authors). But the most important principle, the first on the list of ten commandments, explains the meaning of the whole enterprise, "The creation of this film is to help

people confronted with a hard life to build their future.” Because the protagonists are young people, some at odds with the law, or with behavioural or educational problems, they are all, in the end, lost somewhere between childhood and adulthood.

All have in common that they come from Illawarra region in south-eastern Australia. Their stories, however, could happen anywhere. Because everywhere there are reckless, gullible teenagers who might go to a dangerous party, or a family on the run fleeing from their father and husband, or a young boy trying to train an energetic dog or rebellious, mouthy young people who are constantly confronting their teachers.

Each story is packed with emotion, anger, grief, love, fear, longing and helplessness. The style of the film perfectly underlines the emotions – changing from colour to black and white, peaceful to rough, the pace of the shots is sometimes long making it seem like time is temporarily suspended and in the next moment the pace is choppy and nervous.

The film was made over three years. It was not, in accordance with a third principle, made with a pre ordained script. The actors themselves helped to create their stories. They also, and this was another of the principles, operated equipment, cameras, lights and microphones. Watching over all of this was the director, cinematographer and film editor Phillip Crawford who has worked for many years with young people from the margins of the community.

Rites of Passage is a film which could be viewed as a documentary or a fiction. How many of these stories really happened? How many of these young people are the hero of their own true story? It does not matter. What is important is that the time we spend with the teenagers in this film allows us to see the world through their eyes with all its ugliness and beauty at the same time.”

**Łukasz Kamiński, film critic,
The Warsaw Gazette, Poland**

Currently rated 7.5 out of 10 on IMDB with a 4 out of 5 star rating.

Project Outcomes

Independent Evaluation: SROI (Social Return on Investment)

The Rites of Passage project was independently evaluated using an SROI model by Netbalance.

The SROI report found that for every dollar spent the Rites of Passage project produced \$3.10 worth of social value. We have attached this SROI report to this report.



The Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology was used to forecast the social impact of the RoP project. SROI is an internationally recognised approach for understanding and measuring the impacts of a program or organisation from the perspective of material stakeholders. A monetary figure is then used as a proxy to represent the value of outcomes experienced by stakeholders.

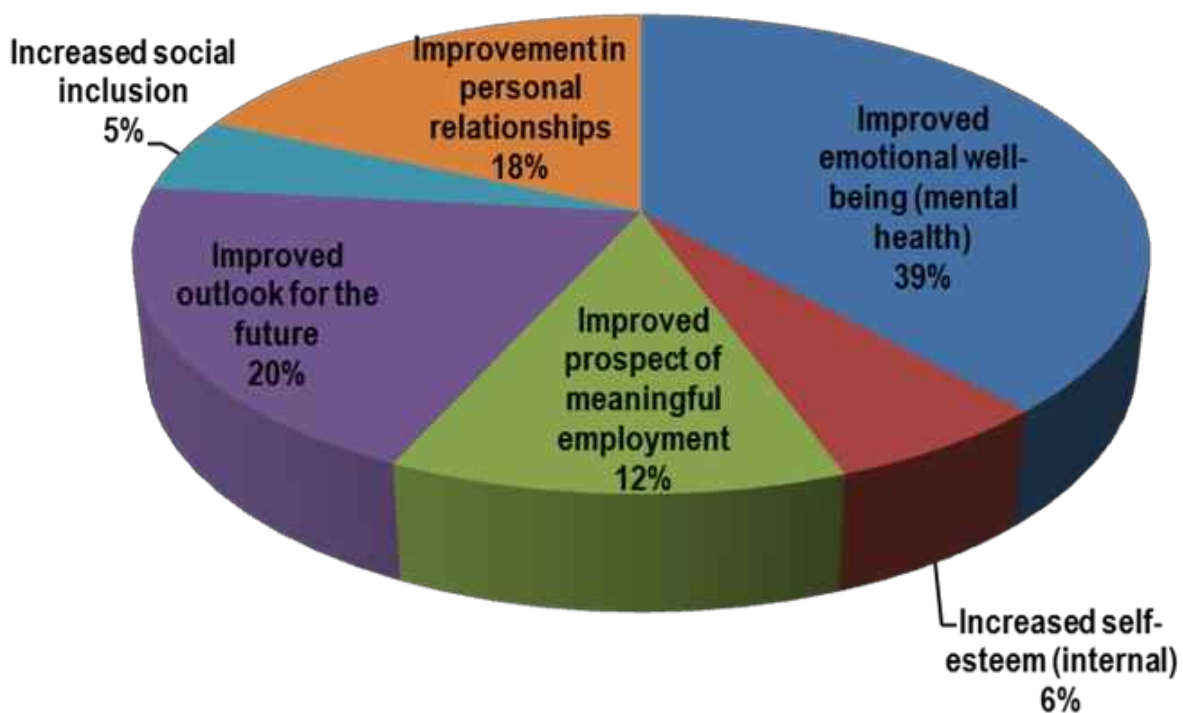
From a total investment of \$632,823¹ over three years (July 2009-June 2013), the evaluation revealed that approximately \$1.94 million in social value was created for various material stakeholder groups identified. The SROI ratio has been presented both as a single figure and as a range to account for a varying degree of assumptions in modelling the social value. For every dollar that is invested in the RoP program, it is calculated that:

- As a single ratio: \$3.10 in social value is created, and
- As a range: between \$2.40 and \$3.50 of social value is created.

Social value was distributed across six identified outcomes² and is illustrated in the figure below.

Social value created per outcome

Social Value per outcome



Here are some quotes from the young people who participated in the project talking about the benefits of the project for them

“Making Rites of Passage was like a way for us to show out our feelings about our lives and the things that us young people face. Showing your feelings can change things. It can change how people feel about you. It can change how you feel about yourself.”

“Around where I live, not many people have achieved things in life, like got jobs. They’ve got into a bad crowd at a young age. So it’s a big thing to have done something like this film. It shows that we don’t have to be no-hopers.”

"Other young people who will see this film will think, "I'm not alone! We're not the only poor family out here, not the only ones with mental health issues, not the only ones with childhood trauma. And they'll think, look what they did, they got off their arse and made a movie."

"I can honestly say making Rites of Passage has not only helped me to find my sense of self and grow self confidence, but it also gave us some of the most incredible experiences of our lives."

"Being a part of a long term project like "Rites of Passage" gave us time to grow and become valued members of our society where as previously we were looked down on by others. It has also lead to experiences that someone in my current situation would not have otherwise been able to experience."



"The stories in Rites of Passage are about choices. We all have choices as we are growing up. The characters in the film have to make choices about what to do when they see violence, whether they will share their personal stories to their school through their poetry, whether they should play with fire, whether they should stay with their parents or whether it is time to step out on their own, whether to trust, whether to get in a car and go to a party with people who you don't know, whether you should follow the crowd or make your own choices about what is right. There aren't easy answers to the stories in the film. But neither are the choices easy that teenagers make as they are growing up. Sometimes you have to learnt from the hard times and from your mistakes. And sharing the stories, sharing the experiences helps"

"Being involved in this project has helped me battle my own personal demons, anxiety and all that that I have had to deal with. Ever since then I've just really got the passion and now I'm studying cert 4 in screen and media."



Quotes from the young people specifically about how they benefited from touring the film..

"I went to Melbourne to get an award, a Campfire award for my short film The Circle, which was screened with Rites of Passage. It was the first award I've ever got...for anything! It made me feel happy going up there and getting my trophy, like I had achieved something. I've finally got a house, after being homeless for ages last year, and I am raising my two girls. It stresses me out sometimes but I like it. Hopefully in the next 12 months I will do something about getting a job. That's what I really want."



“We got to go up the front at the Auburn Festival screening of Rites of Passage and receive the award and they also presented me with an award for my short film. That was crazy, you don’t make a film and expect to get something for it. I just thought I was doing this for fun and then you get an award and it’s so exciting!

Doing all the Q&As was crazy. At first Phill or Gemma would ask people if they had questions and we would help to answer them, but then it got down to just us and we had the microphone, we had to do it ourselves. Which is kind of scary at first but you end up...letting go, then it’s just 30 seconds of insane confidence and you’re not nervous anymore! My short film Concrete Rainbow got in to the big festival for Oz Day Out On The Green, Wollongong. They showed my movie and at the end everyone cheered, they were all looking at me and clapping. That was the best, I felt like I was getting an Oscar! Then my movie won and I got a Sony HD camera for winning and I got an official award in a frame and It’s got my name and the name of my film on it. Its signed by the Mayor. It’s really, really, really cool.”



“I was in Rehab last year, I got out in August. I’ve stayed clean, which is a really good thing. I saved a lot of money. I got my L’s (Learners License) and I got a car.

I went to Brisbane for a screening of Rites Of Passage, that was pretty cool. It was me and Elias, we had to do a Q&A at the end of it and before it we had to say who we are and what the movie was about and introduce the short films. I was so nervous before doing it, I was shitting myself, and then after I felt really good, really good! Getting on

the plane was pretty good too. I've haven't been on planes much, so that was pretty cool.

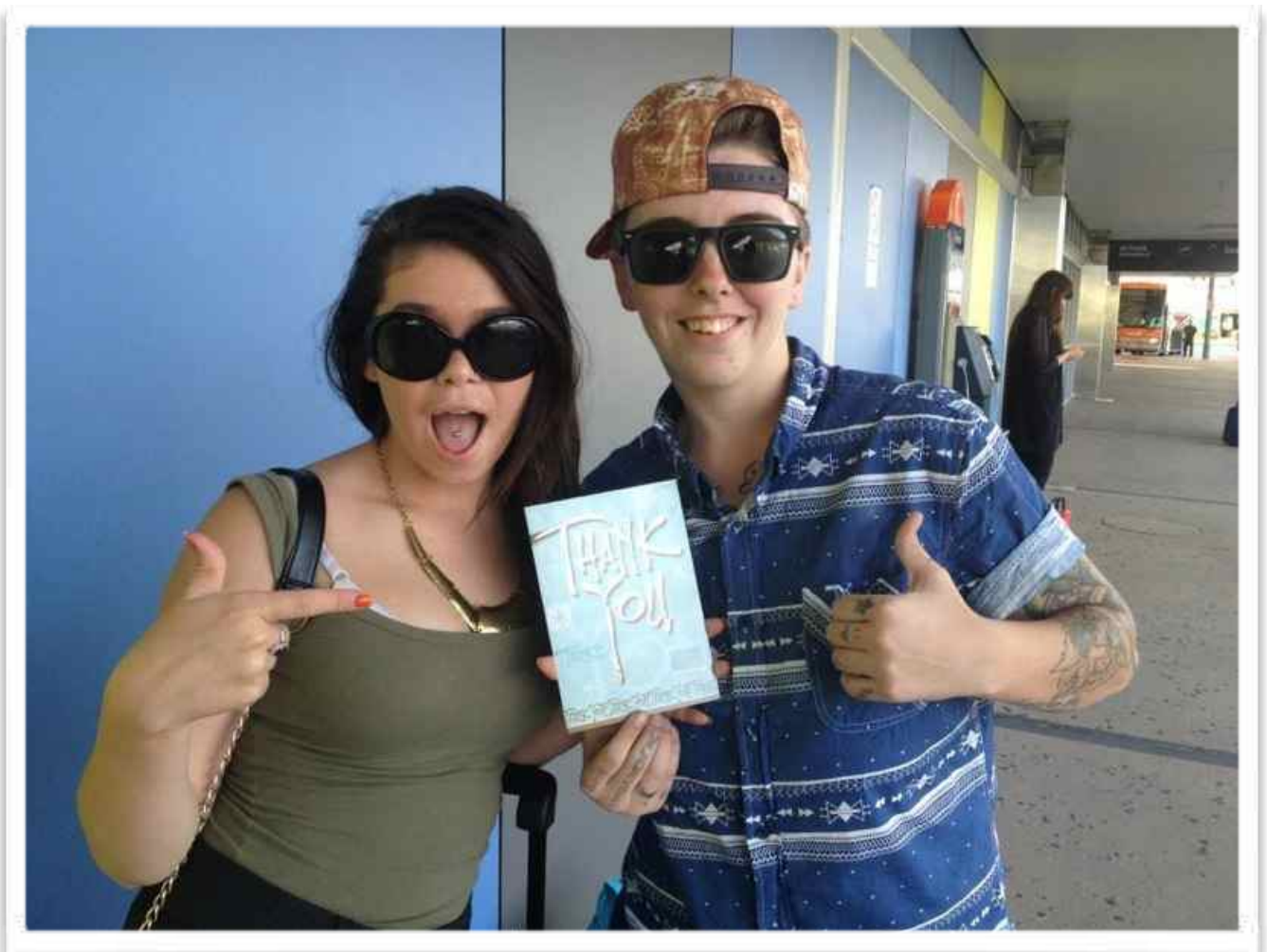
I'm really into fitness these days too. I go to the gym 5 days a week. Usually I have a schedule that I follow, but now I've started doing classes there.

I've quit smoking. I don't miss it at all. I'm on my last day of week 9. I reckon I've come a long way in 12 months. I feel I can do better but, I feel I can do better."

"Last year I got to go to Port Macquarie to present Rites Of Passage at a cinema there. I completed my Certificate 4 in Youth Work at Shellharbour TAFE at the end of 2013. Since then I worked along side Peter Slatery in Armidale for the Rainbow Ridge project and attended Peter's Group Work workshops in Wollongong earlier this year. I've just been given a casual position as a Youth Worker with Wollongong Youth Services and I've also taken on a job mentoring a young boy at the open learning institute in Wollongong. I've loved being a part of BE and Rites Of Passage. It has changed my aspect on how much more there is to life. I've had so many great experiences with BE even in just the last 12 months. Thank you."



"I know that, of the people that were involved in Rites Of Passage, there are some that do grasp onto the fact that they've had this awesome experience of being behind the camera and being on the big screen and all the other stuff and they take that with them and use it in their life, for work or whatever else, but there are others there that don't, I suppose, use it as much, and that's alright. It's a really good thing to have and to boast about and feel proud of, even if that's all they take away from it."



All of us at Beyond Empathy involved in Rites of Passage would like to say thank you to the Aboriginal Benefits Fund for your support of the Rites of Passage project.

Phil Crawford
Gemma Parsons
and the cast and crew.