

Rachel Perkins

Ray Argall interviewed Rachel Perkins for australianscreen on 12 June 2009. This transcript was sourced from http://aso.gov.au/people/Rachel_Perkins/extras/.

We'll just start talking about the clips ... are there any particularly favourite parts there, or something that sort of brings up memories?

Rachel 13A/01:40 Um, well they all bring up memories, really, don't they, as you'd know. Any film. It's sort of the whole barrel of memories. Um, I mean, what specifically? They all sort of bring up memories, of like, oh god, I remember standing outside there – yes, that was really cold, and ...

What led you on this career path ... particularly the move from Canberra to Alice?

Rachel 13A/02:17 OK, alright, I can talk about that, yes. Um ... sounds like someone's vacuuming – I don't know what it is, but ... Um, yes, well I didn't really particularly choose to begin filmmaking, unlike a lot of other people, I didn't have a sort of burning desire growing up or anything, but, I did have a burning desire to go back to Alice Springs. I'd been living in Canberra for a lot of my life and my grandmother's people, my father's mother's people, were from Alice and I didn't really know a lot about them and I felt this sort of cultural gap in my knowledge and so, I think in 1988 when I finished school, um, I heard of a job that had come up in Alice Springs working with the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association, and um, as a TV presenter, and I really didn't want to be a TV presenter, but they were offering an airfare to go up for the interview and I thought, well, I won't get the job but I will get the airfare, um, so I got on the plane and went up and they interviewed me for the TV presenter job and thankfully I didn't get that - they realised as much as I knew that that wasn't my thing and they didn't give me the job, but they gave me a traineeship in the television unit, which was then established to make – it was newly established to make content for, um, Imparja, which was the commercial television licence that still exists in Central Australia and parts of Western Australia and Queensland and South Australia. So, the next day I started working there and we

started making, you know, I was just thrown in to record sound and start editing and, you know, general sort of production work, so it was a great opportunity.

What was the first hands-on job that you had?

Rachel 13A/04:22 The first hands-on job I had was recording sound and someone handed me, you know, one of those shotgun mikes which is in a big sort of plastic container, like a big tube, and, uh, they said, 'You know, here, you can do sound', and, um, of course I didn't realise that the mike wasn't inside, so I was sort of pointing this thing not knowing what to do. No-one had told me, you know, that the mike wasn't inside or how to set it up, and that's when I started learning and I think it's a great way to learn, you know, like you're on the job. I mean, as terrifying as it is - as it is, you're thrown into it and you have to learn really quickly. So - um ...

What were you filming in those early days?

Rachel 13A/05:02 The principal - our principal sort of um area of specialisation I suppose you'd call it was, um, cultural programming. We were making programs, um, to represent Indigenous people, basically, on a channel that was mostly, you know, non-Indigenous, um, so we were making programs that, uh, aimed to maintain culture, so most of them were in language, Indigenous languages, um, and so they might be ceremonies that we were filming, uh, could be bush tucker - people getting bush tucker, could be, um, bush skills, um. Then on the other side we were doing current affairs programs, so interviewing people about legal rights issues, land rights issues, um, covering protests, um, you know, alcohol and health issues, so it was a very, um, very clear, um, use of film and television to maintain and promote culture, um, translate, um, messages for an Indigenous audience, um - it's a vehicle for communication and representation for Indigenous people. So that was really the grounding for people like myself, Warwick Thornton, Erica Glynn, all those people who came out of CAAMA in the late, um, '80s.

What did you go on and continue to do there? Were there other hands-on things?

Rachel 13A/06:31 Yeah, back then in the '80s, we were shooting on, um, you know, very early tape system, so U-Matic, um, and then Betacam, and – but I found, being a sort of small person that the Betacam cameras were too heavy for me, unfortunately. So I wanted to shoot but I couldn't, so I did a bit of editing, a bit of sound, bit of sort of organisation. Moved into producing and did a little bit of directing in my final year, so, yeah, I sort of did everything and then, you know, studio camera and research and, it was, sort of, you did everything, but eventually I realised that I wanted to be in control and wanted to sort of produce and direct and so that's where I started to focus my skills.

Did you get those opportunities there at CAAMA?

Rachel 13A/07:17 Um, yeah, we had like a three year traineeship, um, which was a sort of a government scheme, um, that people were employed in television not only in – at CAAMA, but also in Townsville at the Torres Strait Aboriginal Islander Media Association. SBS and ABC set up Indigenous units at the same time so there were Indigenous people employed in the media in all these sort of pockets of areas. Um, so I was one of those trainees and there was, you know, a bunch of us that worked across Australia, but the problem was that once the traineeships expired, there wasn't funds to employ people, so I left after my traineeship, um, finished and went to SBS and became an executive producer, um, at SBS, of their Indigenous Unit, and they didn't actually have an Indigenous Unit at the time, so it was like an Indigenous Unit of one, which was me, um, but that was a great time too, because we had to re-establish, um, the TV unit and, um, you know, I was very young. I moved to Sydney and I was, I think, 21, so I was very young and inexperienced really to be an executive producer, but, because I was Indigenous, I had this extraordinary opportunity that I was sort of thrust into this senior position because there weren't experienced Indigenous media practitioners at that time, you know, we were creating them, we were becoming them. So, um, I was really sort of promoted above my experience in years, but, um, again, it was an opportunity where, uh, you know, you're thrown in the deep end and you have to learn very quickly and – so, I was very lucky, again, to get that opportunity.

I'm interested in what started at CAAMA and the people you collaborated with there and the working relationships that you formed there that you continued to work with.

Rachel 13A/09:40 Yeah, I think the – I think in that way that, you know, the industry was created almost overnight – the people were thrust in - into these positions and, you know, started shooting immediately and with very little training, you know, started filling positions of editors and producers and directors and it's a very, um, liberating, empowering, exciting time and, um, I think the thing that that created amongst the group of people who were, you know, thrust into those traineeships and positions, was a, um, belief in themselves to actually be able to achieve those things. A lot of other people came in through different ways, you know, they went to university and did theory and studies, but, you know, by the time people like myself and other people like Warwick Thornton and Erica Glynn got to film school, you know, we'd made, you know, 20 or 30 documentaries or two current affairs series or we'd had all of this experience. We didn't know the theory side of things, but we knew how to make programs, you know, maybe not highly sophisticated, brilliant programs, but we knew how to make low budget productions and we knew all of the roles and we were, you know, experienced practitioners. So, I think, um, that gave us a confidence that, um, was very important for the Indigenous sort of production sector. It sort of gave us the confidence that we knew what we were doing, um, to some degree.

Can you remember the first time you worked together – with Warwick Thornton and Erica Glynn and Beck Cole over the years. Was that at CAAMA?

Rachel 13A/11:18 Uh, yeah, yeah. I worked with - I mean, Erica, you know, grew up four of her children while we were working at CAAMA. Warwick and myself were both 18 when we started there. Um, you know, someone spoke to me the other day and said, 'You know, did you realise Warwick was a genius back then?', and I was like, 'Well, no, he was 18', and you know, he just used to grunt and not speak much, so, not really. But, um, no, it was uh, so yeah, we worked – we all

worked together for years, you know, three or four years we spent working together. So we got to know each other pretty well and we spent a lot of our time, you know, travelling out bush together and camping together and partying together and, you know, we all sort of grew up in a way, making films together, so it was a great collegial, learning experience.

And you had Warwick shoot your first film *Radiance*?

Rachel 13A/12:14 Yeah, I mean, I think one of the things that, uh, working at CAAMA gave us, the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association, was a very strong understanding that, um, the empowerment of Indigenous people in terms of taking creative control of their work was central to, um, the process of making the work - as important as making the film was the employment of Indigenous people in the film itself, so, uh, that went hand in hand, and it was about self determination in the way that, you know, Indigenous people should be employed in all of the key creative roles, should have creative control, um, so that it was truly, uh, yeah, an empowering process, not only in the communication of the idea that you were getting through the film, but the, um, the lives of the people that you were working with, so – and in those days, in the 1980s and 1990s, Indigenous people had only just entered the film industry, so, you know, there were no – there was only, you know, 20 or 30 Indigenous people working in the film and television industry, so it was very important for us to take other Indigenous people with us, and ensure that they got jobs as well because, you know, we'd been discriminated against and shut out of the industry for so long, um, you know, that we really wanted to make a difference for our people in terms of opening doors for them to come through as well, so, um, part of making our films now is that we always look for Indigenous people that we can use to work on our films and when I did *Radiance*, which is my first feature, um, Warwick was a natural choice to shoot it because, well, he was a DOP who'd, you know, who had the skills but who was a creative collaborator and a friend and, um, you know, that's one of the things that I'm most proud about, that we both, you know, blindly went in to making our first feature together and, um, both really didn't know what we were doing, but that made it better in a way because we'd both had not too much to

lose, you know, because we weren't - we didn't have reputations to protect and, um, we went into it as friends and that was really important.

How old were when you did *Radiance*?

Rachel 13A/14:34 I don't know. Um, something like that.

When you're working together there's shorthand, perhaps?

Rachel 13A/14:47 Yeah, I think, yeah, that, I mean, yeah, we'd worked together on and off for about 10 years before we did *Radiance*, so there was a shorthand between Warwick and I and, you know, we could communicate and had the same language in a way, um, but I think familiarity breeds, um, you know, and like, you know, I'd get wild with him and he'd get wild with me like you wouldn't with other people that you knew well, but, um, you know, we'd get over that and, you know, yeah, we had a good time. It was very, you know, it was just very great having, you know, the Indigenous director and DOP both running the shoot, you know, on set. That was a really great feeling, and it hadn't been done before then, so, I mean at that time, there'd only been two other films directed by an Indigenous person – one was Tracey Moffatt and the other was Brian Syron, so, uh, it was a very new – new era back then, um, for Indigenous people to have key creative roles.

On the collaborations, in terms of writing and working with Louis Nowra, when can you say that started and how that developed for you as a director?

Rachel 13A/16:17 Yeah, well I – where do I start with that. Michael Riley, who's another Indigenous director, and I, um, started a company called Blackfella Films, because we wanted to work independently - we'd both worked at the ABC and SBS and we wanted to do our own projects, and, um, Michael wanted to do a feature called *New Dawn*, and we were searching around for someone to write it, because neither of us really felt like strong writers, and Louis had written a couple of plays with Indigenous subjects and not a lot of other people had, and so we organised a meeting with him and, um, he declined to write Michael's feature, but then, um, like a

year later or something, I went to see my friend, Trisha Morton-Thomas, who ended up playing Mae in *Radiance*, do a segment out of *Radiance* at the EORA Centre, which is an Indigenous college in Sydney in Redfern, and, um, and I was sort of blown away by the – the scene that she did, and, um, read *Radiance* and then rang Louis and asked him if I could do it as a half hour because at that time the then Australian Film Commission was trying to introduce Indigenous people to drama and, um, they - they were, yeah, starting to offer these half-hour drama projects, and so I thought I could adapt *Radiance* as a half hour, and Louis said, 'Do it as a feature', and so I went, 'Oh, OK', not knowing what that really meant, and, um, so that's when we started to work together, um, to collaborate together, yeah. So it was very sort of generous for him to give a, you know, a sort of a first-time filmmaker, who hadn't done drama before, you know, this work that'd been, you know, well regarded, to adapt.

Moving on to making *Radiance*, were there times you were really enjoying the process?

Rachel 13A/18:13 Yeah, I think the thing that stays with me about *Radiance* is sort of the love I have for the people I worked with, that's the thing that I most enjoyed about it - people like Warwick, you know, Trisha Morton-Thomas who started at CAAMA too, as a journalist, um, Deborah Mailman who, sort of, got her first acting gig on screen, and, you know, Rachael Maza, like, we were all on the same footing, you know, none of them had really done a major film. We were all, sort of, young, about the same age, pretty inexperienced, and working together on this creative endeavour of making a feature was really exciting. Um, and I think that, the experience of working with those other Indigenous people, um, my mates, you know, was just the best part about making that film, and, um, so yeah, we had a lot of fun. We had a lot of fun burning the house down, um. We had lots of fun in lots of ways, um, and, yeah, it was, you know, whatever, it was good fun.

I want to talk about casting, because your three leads come from very different areas. Did you cast widely or how did you come to those three people and bring them together on the same stage?

Rachel 13A/19:43 Yes, well the casting of *Radiance* is sort of a long story. Um, we, uh, we knew we wanted Rachel Maza in it, but because it was three sisters, we had to pick a sort of a jigsaw puzzle that would make them all work together. So we couldn't just cast three disparate actors - they had to sort of have a similar feel and look, um, and the ages had to be right. So, we had one piece of the jigsaw puzzle, which was Rachel Maza.

Rachel 13A/20:36 So the casting on *Radiance* was actually quite tortuous because we had to find three of the cast that would work together, because they were related, they had to sort of physically match, and, um, now there's not a lot of Aboriginal actresses in Sydney - oh, in Australia and back then, there wasn't - you know, this is 10 or 15 years ago now - there was even less, um, so we had a small pool to choose from, and of that pool of actresses, most of them were my really good friends, so, it was really horrible having to cast, you know, audition people and then choose people, because they were all my mates. Like, I knew them all really well, so that was hard, um, but we, um, you know, the first person I'd seen actually do *Radiance* was Trisha Morton-Thomas, who was - who's really one of my very closest friends, and she did it at the EORA Centre, which is a, um, which is a TAFE, Aboriginal TAFE centre in Redfern, and she'd done an excerpt of the play, and it was her performance that made me think, 'This is a great work, I'd love to adapt it'. But when she auditioned, I sort of thought, 'Oh, no, she's not really right'. So over a very long process where I looked at a whole range of actors and eventually got rid of one of them, at the last minute, I brought Trish back into the play, and she said to me, 'You know, I knew this was always my role in the first place - I was just waiting for you to work that out'. So, anyway, I'm glad that we cast her, but it took a long time. Deborah Mailman had - had been living in Queensland. No-one had seen her on screen before. She was - she was a - really a newcomer then. I flew up to Brisbane to see her, um, in a play and cast her that evening when I saw her, because I thought she was just so terrific. And Rachael Maza we knew would always be part of it, but she sort of moved around in roles depending on what other actresses we put with her, so it was a - it was a complicated, elongated process, um, and what it did was that it really put me off auditioning for the rest of my life, because I really hated the experience of

these people coming in to audition and then getting knocked back, and really wanting the role, and I thought, 'I'll never do that again. What I'm going to do from now on is find the people I want and just get them.' Um, and that's what I've pretty much done ever since really.

Did you have a rehearsal period?

Rachel 13A/23:08 Yeah, I mean the great thing about, uh, the experience was that Ned Lander, who was one of the producers, sort of, understood that we didn't have much time – I mean, we didn't have much money, but we had a lot of time, so, we had a six week rehearsal process which we really workshopped the script in, um, and developed that and, you know, it was as long as the shooting time, and it meant that, you know, as an inexperienced director with relatively inexperienced cast, by the time we got on set, we were really sure of what we were doing, and we had a lot of confidence, even though we weren't sure about all of the, um, you know, additional things on sets and all the people who were working there at its core, you know, myself as a director with the cast knew what we were doing in terms of the drama and the scene, so ... we had this very strong core understanding of what we were doing, so I think – and since that experience, I've always believed in the rehearsal process as being a really important part of developing the script, getting the best out of your cast, you know, basically stealing all their ideas, putting them into the script, and getting as prepared as you can to go on set because that's, you know, ultimately, it's the cast that are on set, you know, they're going to make the difference, and that's where the energy really lies, in – in that sort of traditional drama.

You're bringing in camera, sound and the circus that belongs to a film crew production. How was that?

Rachel 13A/25:37 How was the circus, or how did we handle it?

How did you manage that and keep the performances so true?

Rachel 13A/25:47 Well I think by the time we'd got on set, because we'd rehearsed so much, um, and we'd studied the sort of character journeys, uh, of each of the characters in the film, the cast really knew – Trish, Deb and Rachel – what their character would do in any given situation, how they would respond, how they felt about the world, so they could be thrown into any situation and still be in their character because they'd spent a long time constructing that character. So when the circus arrives, you know, of all the crew, they still felt very strongly in what they were doing because they understood their characters really well I think, and I think that's the benefit of, uh, rehearsal process, um, you know, very infrequently do you get such a long rehearsal process in film, but in *Radiance*, we were able to and I think, you know, that comes out of a theatre tradition when you rehearse for so long and think it's very important for film, but, no, I think they – they strongly understood their characters. They identified with their characters in a way, so they were able to keep their, you know, keep - keep their vision of their character intact, you know, beyond all of the other distractions of - that occur on set.

Working with a lot of people you know closely, that you've grown up with, do you feel the pressure ... ?

Rachel 13A/27:27 Yeah, well there is a lot of pressure if you, you know, are casting in a very small – you know, in the Indigenous acting world, there's so few people relative to, you know, Australia, um, there'd only be sort of, 50 Indigenous actors, uh, which is a very small ratio, you know, when you're looking at casting a film – say, you know, 50 to 100 maybe, at the outside, so, and, you know, we all as Indigenous people, we – we mix in that cultural world of the arts and theatre, so we know most of everybody and they know us, and films don't come along that often, you know, for Indigenous actors, so, you know, there might be two a year, maybe, you know, in a good year. So, those roles for Indigenous actors are very, you know, important, so it's very difficult as a director trying to select someone for these very few roles that come up, you know, infrequently, and so, you know, and, of course, Indigenous actors want to be in films because they don't get the opportunity so it's – can be very disappointing, um, for them when they don't get the roles because there's so few. So as a director, that's – that's very hard and what I've learned is to not

audition widely – just to, you know, pursue an actor by looking at their work, and then cast them because it's just too disappointing I think for people.

And expectations on you, through the stories you're telling or the way you're working?

Rachel 13A/28:59 From cast in particular?

No, from your community and so forth. If you're seen as an Indigenous filmmaker, are you representing things in certain ways? Are there expectations on you - not from the film industry?

Rachel 13A/29:25 Um, yeah, perhaps as an Indigenous person and, um ... I mean, I actually – I'm not sure about that, because, you know, the community's pretty diverse, um. I don't know whether you could say the Indigenous community expects this of its directors because there's such diversity within the community and, you know, a lot of us, we're not really known that well in the sort of wider Indigenous community. We sort of are not like sportspeople or, you know, activists, you know, we're just sort of filmmakers – it's pretty obscure, so, I don't find the expectation weighty, but, um, from my community, but I think, um, I've been brought up in my personal life and also through my sort of groundwork at CAAMA, to – to have a responsibility, you know, personal responsibility to make films or to use media as a vehicle to tell my people's story and to create change, and, uh, that's essentially what drives, to date, my work. Um, and I don't feel a pressure to do that. I feel like that's an extraordinary opportunity, you know, that I've been given, and I have been given many opportunities in the industry, you know, all along my career, um, in order to do that. You know, the industry's actually set up these positions which I've been employed in, to do – to do that – to be a sort of a conduit for my people to speak through, so I see that, not as a burden, but as a very, uh, special privilege, really, and – and I know that, you know, Indigenous people before me didn't have that opportunity. I mean, Indigenous people have only been making films for 20 years, so, um, you know, this is something that's been hard fought by people who've come before us – people like Bob Maza and, you know, other activists who've fought long and hard for

Indigenous people to have a voice in what is a really Anglo media industry in Australia, so, um, I feel it's very important as an Indigenous person to use media and film, um, to advance, you know, the issues of my people today, and to, you know, to communicate to the rest of the world, um, Indigenous history and Indigenous issues and culture and, you know, to really use the medium, um, at it's full capacity. Blah blah blah.

How was it researching *Blood Brothers*, going through, finding all of that archival footage, then having to make that into a film?

Rachel 13A/32:21 Um, well *Blood Brothers* began as a – *Blood Brothers* I suppose was the first major project I'd done, and it was at SBS, and, um, I wanted to make something that could really speak to a wide audience because a lot of the programs I'd made at CAAMA were for a very narrow – much more narrow – audience, so I wanted to, um, really do a high-end sort of production series that would, um, really communicate to a wide Australian audience some important, um, historical, um, events that were central to, you know, Indigenous people, really. Um, so, I knew that in – I knew with *Blood Brothers* that I wanted to tell a story about the Freedom Ride, for example. Obviously, I was very close to that story because my father was Charles Perkins, and he was part of the Freedom Ride, and I'd grown up knowing about it. But, um, none of my friends knew about it, and none of my friends knew that we had an apartheid system in Australia up until the 1970s, and I felt that that lack of knowledge about the social segregation in Australia was so widespread, and it meant that a generation of Australians were growing up in ignorance about the way the country shaped a lot of people – people of my father's generation, and I felt it was important to put that history back into the social history of Australia, so, I'm not explaining that very clearly, but, um, yeah, I just felt with *Freedom Ride*, that it was important that people understood that we had a segregated society that was, um, you know, entrenched across the country until the late 1970s, and that here was a – here was a bunch of students who tried to change that, and in fact did change that to some degree, and that we should know about this part of our history, because all my friends knew about South Africa, they knew about apartheid, but they didn't know about apartheid – our version in Australia, so *Freedom Ride* was about expressing that, um.

And of course I had access to my father, Charlie Perkins, who was one of the members of the Freedom Ride, so it's sort of a perfect situation for me to make a film, um, about that issue. And so, we knew we had that story.

Rachel 13A/34:47 And then, Ned Lander who co-produced with me, had a very close association with Jardiwarnpa, a Warlpiri who I also knew from my days at CAAMA, and he wanted to make a story about the fire ceremony, um, which he'd become familiar with, um, working as a filmmaker over the years. So we had those two stories. He also wanted to make a story about Max Stuart, who my father was very close to – he was a senior law man in Alice Springs, and I knew Max, so we started to have this situation where we had sort of three – you know, two or three stories and, uh, and then we thought, OK, well, let's make it around these Aboriginal men, and then we found Kev Carmody, Trevor Graham, another filmmaker wanted to make a film about him, so we had our match. We had the four men, um, a few of which are deceased now, but, so we called it *Blood Brothers*, and that's sort of how it came together, but again, it was the biggest project I'd ever done. It was, um, you know, it was over a million dollars, uh, which was relatively large for me at that stage, and, um, you know, with the Film Finance Corporation involved, and multiple pre-sales, and so it was a, um, it was a big learning curve for me on a number of levels. I don't know whether I answered your question, but anyway.

When you were going through the archival footage, is this the first time you'd seen all of that stuff, particularly of your father?

Rachel 13A/36:09 Um, yeah, look, the wonderful thing about, um, making *Blood Brothers*, was the opportunity to delve into the archival record, um, particularly at the ABC, who have an extraordinary collection, and a lot of it hadn't been used before, so when I began researching, I went into the ABC archive and, um, looked at stuff, initially around the Freedom Ride and found extraordinary footage and, um, radio material about that, and then, you know, that led me to all sorts of tangents as you can when you're researching archival footage, and – yeah, I just found, uh, the opportunity to use that material really fantastic and, um, so that informed, um, a lot of the *Blood Brothers* series, and in particular, *Freedom Ride*, and I think it also gave me

an understanding of, you know, when you look at archival film, um, as a filmmaker, you realise how precious film is, and how it captures a moment in time, and – and how precious it is to filmmakers later on, when they can go back and use this extraordinary footage, and so it gave me a real understanding of the importance of filmmaking, in terms of capturing Australian cultural history, and, uh, you know, people like Jim Spigelman, who shot the Super 8 footage outside the Moree baths, which is just like gold, you know, for a filmmaker like me, um, those – those items of film are so precious, um, because really they capture a moment that can't be necessarily communicated, you know, on paper or, you know, there's something about seeing the students lining up in front of the Moree baths, or with their signs, or being hunted out of the Moree pool, um, that says so much. You know, film can really translate, um, an extraordinary amount of things, so, yeah, it gave me – gave me an appreciation of what film can do – the power of it, and how important it is.

You followed that archival footage with your father in the park. Were you actually filming him?

Rachel 13A/3824 Yes, yep.

Were you finding out things about him and your family through that?

Rachel 13A/38:40 Yeah, I mean, you never think as a child that you're going to – you would never think, I don't think necessarily as a child, that you're going to interview your parent, and I think a lot of times, you know, we don't ask our parents the sort of intimate questions that, you know, perhaps we would like to in life, but, uh, interviewing them gives you this opportunity to – to ask these questions, and ask them, well, what did it feel like growing up, you know, how did you feel about things like that, and, um, so making the *Freedom Ride* gave me an opportunity to get an insight into my father's life that perhaps I wouldn't have normally. Um, and I think, you know, because it was me he spoke candidly to me, but perhaps not as candidly as he would have to someone else, because perhaps he wanted to protect me as well, but, um, you know, making the film with him was a really great experience and we, you know, as part of the film, we went back to a lot of the places that the

Freedom Ride went to, and, um, yeah, it was a wonderful opportunity. I feel proud that I was able to document his experience on the Freedom Ride and come to understand that a bit. My only regret is that I didn't do a proper interview with him later, um, a more comprehensive, you know, interview to, um, look at his whole life, because I think that was – would have been really interesting, and he agreed to do that, but I never – I never got around to doing it, but, um, yeah. Did that answer your question?

***First Australians* was a really big undertaking. Why did you do that and what were you hoping to do? Had this been something you'd thought about for a long time, or something you felt the time was right for?**

Rachel 13A/40:38 Um, uh, yeah, *First Australians* was one of those great moments where you're in the right place at the right time, I think. I had, some 5 or 10 years earlier when I was at the ABC, tried to get up a similar series, called *The Cause*, and Alec Morgan wrote a couple of treatments for me, but it didn't get any traction. I wanted, at that time, to do something that, uh, captured the sort of civil rights movement in Australia, and that didn't get to happen at the ABC, but later, SBS, in 2001, approached me to do the history of Indigenous Australia, and they didn't have much more of a brief. All they said was it's going to be 8 one hours, you know, here's two million bucks, go for it, you know. That was sort of the brief. And, it was just, yeah, one of those great moments where I was in the right place, they approached me, they had some money, the general manager of SBS had a commitment to do something about Indigenous history because of his association with Gordon Briscoe, and the Fred Hollows Foundation. Gordon, an Indigenous professor who we interviewed in the series, uh, said to Nigel Milan, who was then the General Manager of SBS – Nigel asked him, 'What can I do for Indigenous people?' And Gordon Briscoe said, 'Give them back their history'. So, Nigel Milan said, 'Right, I'm going to do an Indigenous history series on SBS. It's going to be well funded, and, you know, here's the money to do it.' So, they approached me, and, um, so we began, and really, uh, it was I think probably and will be the most important thing that I'll ever work on, um, for me personally because it really was an opportunity to try and tell the Indigenous story in a comprehensive manner from an Indigenous perspective, um,

over a span of sort of 200 years. It had never been done before, and probably won't be done again for another 50 years, so it felt like, um, an opportunity to really, uh, give back to Indigenous people some sort of, um, I suppose satisfaction in getting the record straight – in having the story told, by Indigenous people. And for Indigenous Australians, giving them some sort of inkling of the formation of Australia from an Indigenous point of view, which they knew very little about. So, it felt like a really, uh, important heritage project, and I suppose, you know, I have spent six years of my life making it, and I, you know, I've – for me, it's incredibly important. For others, perhaps not, which is fine, but, you know, we had very big ambitions for that project, and, you know, nothing less than actually changing the way a new generation of Australians see their country. Whether it will achieve that, I don't know, but, um, it's going into most secondary schools in Australia, and hopefully will become part of the, um, national curriculum, so, you know, very ambitious to think that we could with a television program, change, you know, the view of a whole bunch of Australians about their country, but, um, I think that that's a great thing about film and television, you know, it is a powerful medium. You can use it for good, you can use it for change, it does go into people's lounge rooms, it does change them, you know, by broadening their understanding. It's – it's a great way of communicating and to have the opportunity to tell the Indigenous story, um, was, you know, an extraordinary opportunity, so, that's a bit of a rave. I'm really out of breath.

It is a really unique series. There's been bits which have been captured, but nothing that was like a comprehensive view.

Rachel 13A/45:12 Yeah, and look, this wasn't even comprehensive either, really, you know.

When you're thinking about your audience, that was a really big audience, are you thinking about where your films are going to go, or who's going to see them?

Rachel 13A/45:37 Yes, I mean, I think I'm – I know some filmmakers make films for themselves as artistic expressions, but I make films for an audience and - and I think about them very keenly when I'm making the film. Now – now I do.

I mean, after having made some films that no-one watches, I now understand that I've got to make them for people, ultimately, um, and yeah, I always think, for all my work, I've always thought, 'What is the Indigenous audience going to think of this?' first. They're my first sort of cab off the rank, and then I think about others. So, yeah, every film is made for a certain bunch of people, and usually it's for, you know, average people. I don't know. I'm not being very articulate about that, but ...

You mentioned schools for *First Australians*. If you look at *Bran Nue Dae*, or *One Night the Moon*, are you thinking of a younger audience there?

Rachel 13A/46:46 Well, for a film like *Bran Nue Dae*, certainly I'm thinking about young kids and their parents, and that's what I'm thinking – hoping – who will go and see it. And, uh, for *One Night the Moon*, uh, it's such a strange piece of work in lots of ways, it's like a depressing musical, I didn't really think that anybody'd go and see it. So, and, uh, you know, it was just a sort of an art – arty film I suppose, um, so yeah, each film – each film is different and each film, um, fills its own niche. With *First Australians*, you know, we were looking at sort of secondary age up to sort of 60, 65, 70 year olds as our – as our brief. Um, so, yeah, every film is catering for a different sort of sector of the public, and *First Australians* was really made for Australians, you know, it was made to benefit them.

Do you want to talk about storytelling with music, like you did in *One Night the Moon* and *Bran Nue Dae*?

Rachel 13A/47:58 Yeah, um, I mean, I don't really like musicals, um. I never really have. I mean, I like a few. I like *Chicago*, and I'm sure there's a few others that I like, but – but yet I've made two musicals – two Indigenous musicals, um. *One Night the Moon*, uh - what attracted me about that was the music initially. Like, I loved the music. When I put in a sort of cassette, which it was then, and heard 'This Land is Mine', I thought, 'Oh god, I'll be able to do something great with that'. You know, it's such a great song, um, and it was just a demo, and I think, apart from filmmaking, my other passion is music, so, musicals do weave music and film together, um, and, so, I suppose that's why I keep making them. But, yeah, I think,

um, I think not liking musicals very much, um, helps because I think you're more critical of the elements. I don't know. I'm not very articulate about all that.

How much freedom did that give you? You said you heard the song and thought you could do something with this, what did that mean?

Rachel 13A/49:12 Um, well I suppose the songs were written to – the songs had been composed for *One Night the Moon* prior to the film being created, so, we had the songs as a template. And, we had to really work around those songs, and write scenes for those songs to fit in. And the songs had been written as a sort of a narrative, um, and were the sort of spine of the existing script, so it really turned things on its head, but it gave – it gave a structure because we had a suite of songs to work to, and the songs then determined the rhythm of a scene, and the action of a scene, and, um, so in a way, we were – we were making the film to the music, which was the whole idea of that concept – there were a couple of films made in that series – I think three – commissioned by Paul Grabowsky, who's a famous Australian composer, and his idea was to try and get music and film to have a different relationship, to have a more, um, integrated relationship in the creative process, and that's certainly what happened with *One Night the Moon*, because the songs drove the narrative in a much stronger way, and the musicians, Paul Kelly, Kev Carmody and Maireed Hannah were all part of the creative process – we wrote the script together, and, uh, you know, they were – they were heavily involved. So it really did, um, it did, uh, drive me in a different direction in terms of filmmaking because I had to, um, yeah, be – be driven by music rather than just narrative or schedule or you know, the myriad of things that, um, drive a film's production and direction.

Did that enable you to do things with the camera that you might not have done normally, and in the location?

Rachel 13A/51:00 Well, looking back at it, um, it feels like in a way, quite a conservative film, um, because it – it's shot fairly straight. You know, like, you look at video clips these days, which are really, I feel, overtaken the musical form, um - you know, *Rage* and *Video Hits*, they're sort of like the modern musical in a way,

three-minute chunks of it – and, um, but with *One Night the Moon*, we didn't really go down the video clip road. We sort of stuck to a sort of classical drama piece, so, um, it did allow us to be more stylistic, I think, and, uh, we stripped back a lot of the dialogue, so that the music really told the story, um, so the characters communicate in song, rather than in words, and that, I think, gave the film an overall, sort of stylistic difference that set it apart from most sort of dramatic works in that it had little dialogue, you know, it had a lot of song and it was just really vision and – vision and music communicated the narrative.

Taking that to *Bran Nue Dae*, I guess you had that experience working with that - did you take it further?

Rachel 13A/52:16 Yeah, I mean, um, I think, um, the sort of way that I came to *Bran Nue Dae*, um - the way that I came to *Bran Nue Dae* is that a friend of mine, Graham Isaac, had the rights to *Bran Nue Dae*, and I'd just finished *One Night the Moon*, actually, and I thought, well I've done one musical, you know, I can do another, maybe. So I rang Graham and said, you know, I think I should direct it, and, um, he graciously allowed me to, um, although I had to be approved by Jimmy Chi, the author of the play, but, um, I felt like I had some grounding in the musical form, so I knew a lot of the things that we would have to have prepared, and, um, for instance that we would have to have the music completely, you know, mostly constructed beforehand, and, you know, just certain logistical things that you need with musicals to be done, so, yeah, I certainly felt more informed. Whether I've made a better film in *Bran Nue Dae* because of it, I've got no idea, because at this - you know, at the time of this interview being done, it hasn't been released, so, who knows until an audience sees it, but, um, certainly I was more prepared for it – *Bran Nue Dae* – given I'd shot *One Night the Moon*, and that was also a musical.

How do you work in the editing room? Is that an important part of the process for you?

Rachel 13A/53:46 Yeah, I find editing the most enjoyable, actually, out of the whole process. I find writing really hard, I think that's the hardest. Very hard to

write well, and I don't think I necessarily do it well, um. Shooting is fun, but always, you know, there's always so many pressures on you when you're shooting. It's very exhilarating, and lots of adrenalin, but its – can be tough. Editing, you know, you can just sit in a nice dark room and all of your rushes are there, and all the choices have been made, and, really, it's where the creative process, in a way, really kicks in for me because you've got all this material, and it could go almost in any direction – and often it does for me, so, what I like to do in the editing suite is leave the editor to construct something, um, and then give them feedback. I really feel like, uh, each person has something creatively to contribute and I like them to contribute that, and I think they bring their own, you know, feel and ideas and knowledge about a thing and often they know more about you than, you know, you – or they know more about the form than you do, so, uh, why not bring their expertise to play, so I let the editors, you know, run the show a bit in the editing room, probably more than others. Um, and trust their instincts and view a lot – a lot more than others perhaps would, but, um, I think that's the sort of – that's the benefits of collaboration.

But with musicals - the soundtracks, the set pieces - how do you find the creative process, what you're able to contribute at that point?

Rachel 13A/55:38 Yeah, well, um, because the music in a musical determines so much because it's, uh – it gives a rhythm really, that's the big thing about it – it gives rhythm to the whole piece and so the editing has to match the rhythm of the music, and so, really, it defines the style of a certain work or sequence, um, so you have to be true to the – to the original sort of concept of the song I think, and – and shape it around that in the editing suite. Mostly.

You worked with a lot of bureaucracies, what was your experience with that?

Rachel 13A/56:51 Well, when I began – I worked – I've worked as an executive producer both at the ABC and SBS, both in their Indigenous Units, and I was always very young. I was 21 when I started at SBS as an EP, and I think probably 25 or something when I was at ABC, so all of the executive producers would have been 50 plus at least, um, had much more experience than I but didn't know

anything about Indigenous Australia, and that's what I sort of felt I knew about, so I had some sort of authority in that I was speaking from you know, a point of knowing about Indigenous Australia, but, um, I found a lot of generous older people supported me in teaching me about the bureaucracy and leading me through it, and understanding my inexperience, and, um, you know, helping me through that process. It was very good. I learned a lot from a lot of mentors, you know, people like Penny Chapman and Darryl Karp and others, uh, who – who sort of chaperoned me through the process, but I found – I found that my aspirations and that of the bureaucracy didn't, you know, they collided really. I mean, I wanted to make high-end, you know, Indigenous programs in drama, in a whole lot of genres, uh, bigger budget stuff that appealed to a wider bunch of people, and really the bureaucracies ultimately wanted me to make half-hour, you know, programs, um, like they do. Like they've been doing for the last 20 years, that would cover everything, you know. What do they even call it, um, magazine program, which is basically a mishmash of things, and I'm not saying that's bad – I think it's important, but I – I had other aspirations, and, um, and ultimately, I – after trying for years to get, you know, bigger drama projects up – comedy series, you know, things like that, and not getting it done, like an Indigenous news program, and other things, I realised that actually, the broadcasters didn't want that. They just wanted really this small, if you want to call it token, Indigenous representation on their network, and, you know, the other commissioning editors weren't going to give me any of their budgets to spend on Indigenous content, so I left – them both. Much happier for it.

We were talking about working in the bureaucracies ... what's it been like having a foot in two cultures, white culture and Indigenous culture?

Rachel 14A/01:58 Yeah, well I – you know, I cope very well in the non-Indigenous world, um, and, you know, I, um, I'm learning still about, you know, the Indigenous world in terms of my traditional culture, you know, I don't speak my language fluently, uh, there's a lot I've got to learn on that side of the fence, um, but, uh, I suppose, I'm very fortunate, you know, uh, in that I can, um, move in either world, and have moved in either world, and have, um, have, you know, adapted both cultures very easily into my own identity and I think, you know, there's a cliché that

often you see in white films, actually, you know, which is like, torn between two worlds, you know, not black, not white, you know. It's like that whole *Jedda* stereotype bullshit that, um, has been created by, uh, non-Indigenous people -- most -- most Indigenous people I know, um, are like a lot of multicultural Australians, um -- their lives are enriched by having dual - dual cultures and dual identities, and certainly, for me, um, being an Indigenous person, um, has been a great benefit to my career. I mean, that's a big part of why I've been given so many opportunities in the film industry, because I am Indigenous, and because people have wanted those stories from Indigenous people, they've wanted Indigenous people to make them. So, um, rather than the, um, you know, the usual sort of, um, story of discrimination and, you know, not enough opportunities, the opposite has been the case for me, and I'm very lucky because of that. Um, I've had lots of opportunities because I am Indigenous, and a lot of other people I know -- my colleagues -- have the same experience, so, you know, that's something to be very proud of, and that's a success story, really, for Indigenous people and, you know, the Australian industry, that we have created opportunities for Indigenous people -- not on the scale that we should, you know, Indigenous people are only like zero point -- zero point zero six of the film workforce, but that's increasing -- slowly.

That's a very good point to bring up the Indigenous drama workshops. Do you want to talk about the people who were there and what that gave them?

Rachel 14A/04:51 Yes, well I think it was in -- god, I can't remember what year it was ... do you want to know years? No. Um, (at least 10 years ago) definitely, no, more than now. Um, I mean, in the early '90s, something happened in the Australian industry which has now led to - well, actually, in the early '90s, there was an initiative that happened in one of the government funding agencies - the Australian Film Commission. They set up an Indigenous Branch, and like the ABC and SBS, it was staffed by Indigenous people -- small, you know, cluster of Indigenous staff worked there and their job was basically to create opportunities for Indigenous people in the film and television industry, and at that stage, Wal Saunders was the Director of the Indigenous Branch at the Film Commission, and he got me to come in as a consultant and finance what was then called, um, the Indigenous Drama

Initiative. And, at that stage, only two films – two dramas – had been made by Indigenous people. Two feature films. Brian Syron and Tracey Moffatt – around that time, perhaps only one. And, so the idea was to get Indigenous filmmakers, of which there was a small cluster, who'd mostly been working in the community organisations and move them into making drama. So, there was an offer of six ten-minute films, um, and, you know, a number of people applied and they were short-listed, and there was workshops, and, um, six short films came out of that initiative and I produced one of them for Warwick Thornton, *Payback*, um, and that set these filmmakers on a path, then, to – to make more drama and steadily, you know, every couple of years, the – the – the length would increase to half hours and get longer and longer, and so, that's been a process that's continued for more than 10 years, and now we've seen, um, you know, Warwick Thornton, for instance, make his debut feature, Beck Cole is about to make hers, Richard J Frankland who was part of the first drama initiative, has made his, so we've now seen what was two Indigenous features, increase to eight. Ivan Sen was part of that, um, so in a very short time, we've, you know, quadrupled our – our output, um, and Indigenous people have got more experience in the drama area.

What was the idea in the original workshops? What was special about them in terms of actually realising those things?

Rachel 14A/07:24 Um, well I think what was special about, um, those initiatives, to bring Indigenous people into drama, was that, uh, the initiatives run by Indigenous people, and the workshops were designed in that they brought the best sort of tutors – filmmakers, technicians, you know, DOPs, sound recordists, in to collaborate with these Indigenous people and make films with them, in a way, so, again, it was the sort of hands-on experience, so filmmakers would be – uh, they'd write a script, they'd be selected, um, they perhaps work with a script editor, um, they'd then go into pre-production, they'd do the full, sort of, drama production experience, so that they would learn really what it means – what a gaffer means, what a grip means, you know, what a sort of a character arc means, you know, what editing – what you do in an editing room, they'd learn the entire process, um, but in a short – a short period of time for a short film and with a smaller budget, so, less risk. So, it really introduced them to the process of drama and filmmaking, in a very hands-on

way, um, and in an environment that was designed to be culturally supportive of them as an Indigenous person as well, so, very special and it's been very - very successful. I mean, those short films that have come out of those initiatives, have travelled all over the world, have garnered, um, a lot of criticism - critical success at most of the major international film festivals, and have done, you know, better than most Australian shorts have done, so, it's been really a wonderful success story. And it's meant that Indigenous filmmaking in Australia is leading the world in terms of, you know, its other comparative nations, like Canada and New Zealand. We're sort of streets ahead of most of those countries, which is great.

Do you think that it's provided a creative bubble – that's given you creative independence in a way that perhaps other people would benefit greatly from, but that you've actually been able to take advantage of that opportunity?

Rachel 14A/09:30 Yeah, I think that, um, the benefit in creating an Indigenous branch and creating Indigenous initiatives, um, is that you create a hothouse of ideas and energy and, um, collaboration and, um, support, so people go through this experience, exchanging ideas in an environment that they're doing it with their friends, and it - it starts a movement in a way, and that movement gains momentum, so that it becomes recognised as – as, you know, a wave of creativity that runs through the wider sort of film – film world I suppose, so I think, um, in recent times, we've seen that creativity really, you know, begin to peak, with people like Ivan Sen, and Warwick Thornton, who are getting international success for their work, and I think, um, I think the, you know, whole industry can learn from that collegial creative, um, experience because, you know, we – we've seen it pay off. But, um, yeah, I don't know.

Because ... I don't want to say rules were broken, but ... when you've got a director shooting their own film ... a lot of those things apply to shorts as well ... there wasn't big brother saying this is the way you have to make films. There was an openness to what was happening in that bubble.

Rachel 14A/11:03 Yeah, other filmmakers perhaps would disagree with you about that. Yeah. Yeah, they would. They'd say that, you know, I mean, I think that they, you know, those films are very, you know, they were short films that are very nurtured. Some would see them as being too nurtured, you know, but, uh, whatever the, you know, whatever the process, the outcome has been very positive, and very, you know, it's been a very supportive environment. Really, I don't think I should talk much about that because that's not my experience, you know, I haven't gone through the initiative.

How about the documentary initiative ... I know that drama and documentary are two different fields and you've worked in both.

Rachel 14A/11:58 Yeah, um, it's always been difficult, you know, look, in saying that there's a lot of opportunities for Indigenous people in the film industry, it's also very difficult to get your films financed. Um, there's only a certain amount of money spent on Indigenous work at the national broadcasters and, um, they're really the main market for Indigenous work, and, so, in the mid '90s we started an initiative called the National Indigenous Documentary Fund, and I was the executive producer of the first couple, I think, um, at the ABC, and, uh, that was an initiative to try and get longer length documentaries, stand-alone documentary opportunities, for Indigenous people, and it's still running. I think it's in its twelfth year or something like that now, and it was an annual – annual fund for documentary, and I think, um, you know, it's been a very important fund in that it's managed to maintain, you know, a production opportunity every year for Indigenous people with decent budgets, um, with a sort of a high-end, sort of, high-end, you know, opportunity to make, you know, in-depth films, so, that's been sort of a critical cornerstone of the Indigenous production sector as well, that's an annual opportunity, and that's all mostly government funded. I mean, all of the Indigenous work is mostly government funded. It – mostly exclusively.

Do you think the work you've done in documentary has helped your work in drama and vice versa?

Rachel 14A/13:34 Yeah, I think that a lot of Indigenous filmmakers, unlike a lot of non-Indigenous filmmakers, really move between genre – well, documentary and drama – a lot more, and often it is the documentary work that informs the drama decisions that people will make in terms of story selection, or life experience, or the worlds that they're sort of creating in a – in a drama scenario. So, uh, I like that fluidity between documentary and drama. I really have a passion for both, and I find it very restrictive that people often, you know, try and label filmmakers in one genre or another, and, um, I think there's such an exciting range of stories to be told in the documentary form for Indigenous people, and, uh, you know, we've just really got the tip of the iceberg – there's so many more stories to be told, and, uh, documentary's a great, you know, avenue to do that.

Do you want to talk a bit about your work in policy and what – you've been on the boards of quite a few screen organisations. How have you found that experience, in particular, Screen Australia, now going through so many changes and how you've hung in there ...

Rachel 14A/15:02 Yes, well I've been on most film boards in Australia. I've been on the NSW FTO Board, the Australian Film Television Radio School Board, the Australian Film Commission Board, now I'm on Screen Australia. I'm on the National Indigenous Media Association Board, the Indigenous Screen Australia Board, the National Documentary Conference Board – so bored of being on boards. But, um, the reason I've been on all of those boards is because I've seen an industry go from zero almost, um, to all these other opportunities, and I know that those opportunities – how they're created, because I've worked in bureaucracies, and I've been on boards, and I see how you can create change by having influence at the top of an organisation, and how it filters down, and so, it's been very important for me to, in a way, you know, sounds like a cliché and all of that sort of thing, you know, like giving back to the community, but it's true that, you know. I've had a lot of opportunities, um, provided to me in the industry, and I want to ensure that those opportunities are there for other Indigenous people to, um, exploit and benefit from. And, you know, I've seen the way that the Australian Film Commission has changed the Indigenous film sector and grown it, and I've seen the way that the film school,

you know, has created a whole, um, new generation of filmmakers through its, you know, its scholarship programs and a whole range of special programs to make Indigenous people more welcome at that school. I mean, there wasn't a graduate at the Australian Film Television and Radio School until 1991, and it had been going for 20 years, you know. The ABC had been going since the 1960s and they didn't have an Indigenous strategy until, uh, like the late 1980s, so these are relatively new initiatives, but very important initiatives for Indigenous people, and very important for the continuity of our industry, and so I suppose, um, because of my background, and uh, because I've sort of, I don't know, big noted myself, I'd be put on these boards, and, um, you know, all of those boards have had Indigenous strategies – all of those organisations, and they've been leaders in their field, and I feel very good that that's happened. And, I mean, I think that more can be done, particularly at the ABC, and SBS. Um, the commercial networks, I think we have very little hope of having any influence there, but, um, yeah. Anyway, I think, um, I mean, filmmaking and policy, unfortunately, go hand in hand, you know. Filmmaking is a very creative undertaking, but what drives filmmaking is policy, and, you know, the only reason we have an Australian film industry is because it's supported by the government, and that support comes out of very hard-won, fought-for policy, that makes sure that the government puts money aside for Australian filmmaking, and within that policy, they put money aside specifically for Indigenous filmmaking. And we've now got to a point where the Minister for the Arts says that Indigenous filmmaking is central to support for an Australian film industry, and we never had that. It was the first time we've got it, and that's important, hard-won achievement that flows down to Indigenous people on the ground. I mean, people don't realise that when the minister says Indigenous filmmaking is central to Australian culture, that that means someone out at Brewarrina, you know, might actually get a traineeship, might get a job, and might, you know, be able to change their lives like I've done, and people like Warwick Thornton have done, you know, to actually get a job – improve the, you know, circumstance of their family, their community, tell the story of their people. You know, that's the way that policy – policy means opportunities, and if you don't have, you know, good policy at a senior government level, then you don't get the outcomes at a grassroots level, and I've seen the way those things connect. And that's why I get on all these boards. And, you know, sort of try and do what I can.

Do you want to talk about NITV and what that is and what it could be?

Rachel 14A/19:34 God, that's a hornet's nest. Shit, this is a long interview. It's alright. No, no. I interviewed someone for five-and-a-half hours for bloody *First Australians* ... Yeah, naughty. Yes. What to say about ... So, so NITV is – stands for the National Indigenous Television service, and it's in its second year. Um, it's very unfunded. It gets, um, 14 million dollars a year, compared to, say, the ABC, that gets 600 million a year. Um, so it's a niche, in the very sense of the word, but it's a tiny, new player on the Australian, um, television scene. Um, it's one of a small cluster of Indigenous broadcasters around the world. There's one in Canada, um, the Inuit people own one, um, there's one in, uh, New Zealand, Maori Television, um, and there's some Irish language channels and Welsh language channels for the indigenous languages there. So it's a very new player. Because of its newness, um, it has had major growing pains in being established because it just had very little funding, and it had to be up on air within six months of getting its initial funding grant. So it's had a really tough time, and the fact that it's even on air is a major achievement. It's not seen by a huge amount of Australians, because the government hasn't chosen to give it free to air, um, spectrum, which is how we see the ABC and the commercial channels, so it goes out on a very small network of people through Foxtel and through, um, through a regional remote licence. So it's only – it's potentially seen by an audience of about 6 million, but is much, much lower than that. But its aim is to – NITV's aim is to really intervene in the broadcasting, sort of, hegemony, which is pretty much, you know, Anglo-Saxon, you know, white Australian, um, very narrow view of culture, and it's meant to be, you know, a conduit for information and programs for, by and about Indigenous people, and it's, you know, slowly making a difference. Slowly, the, you know, production dollars are filtering down to the community. More people are getting jobs, but, you know, it's still in its early stages, and, you know, people have been talking about an Indigenous television service for years, you know, for like 20 years before it came along, people have wanted one. Now we've got it, we have to make it the best it can be, and that's going to take time. Um, but, there's a lot of, you know, support for it. It just needs to, you know, needs to be the best it can – it can, but it's got a long way to go.

Rachel 14A/22:39 Well, this is, um ... I feel like a presenter. This is, um, this is Sydney Harbour. Um, Gadigal Country, and this is the wharf, and it's like an arts precinct. It's where, um, Sydney Theatre Company and Bangarra are, and Blackfella Films, which is my company with Darren Dale. We rent a space from Bangarra, so you can see the lovely harbour. We're very lucky to be able to work here. Thank you New South Wales Government. And in here is where all the organisations are, and here are our landlords, Bangarra. They're in here. They've all gone home, because it's Friday night. Of course, Blackfella Films are still working hard. But this is our office. Blackfella Films is an Indigenous production company which has been running since 1993. Um, we've got, uh, there's an editing suite down here. It's a bit dark, so, probably it's a bit dark down there, but there's a recording studio down here. This is Niki Narli Recording Studio, and here are some – this is Niki Narli Recording Studio and here are some talented young black people making music in there. This is David Page's recording studio, and into the darkness, again, we've got, um, the accountant and the editor work down there. And upstairs is where all the slaves work, and none of them are here at the moment. They've all gone home too. Um, Friday night. So this is our, yeah, workspace, and this is our kitchen, and this is my office. I get the flash office, because I'm the boss. No. Um, and that's it really. Small, well-oiled, unit.

Aside from the film industry, is there anything you do when you're not making films? What do you do?

Rachel 14A/24:57 Uh, I basically make films. It's pretty much what I do. Most of the time. Um, and – but mostly actually, it's not making films. It's acquiring grants, and it's applying for money, or it's, you know, writing submissions, or doing the accounts, and you only get to make films part of the time. So, a lot of it, because we're an independent production company, and we're independent filmmakers, we do everything. You know, we do the mail, we do the tax, we do the filing, you know, we do the dishes. We, uh, you know, we, uh, we don't have people to do that like you do in another organisation, but the good thing about being independent is it gives you, you know, you're your own boss, and you get to do the projects you want, and you get

to work the way you want, and you don't have to wear a suit every day, and you get to - yeah, you get creative freedom, so, yeah, I don't really know what I do. What do I do? I don't - well, yeah, I don't know what I do really, when I don't make films. Not much. Not macramé. Yeah, I saw that. No, I don't ... yeah, just spend time with family and friends, I suppose, like most people. Read, go bush, things like that.

Do you have a strong personality trait - something that makes you really good at what you do?

Rachel 14A/26:24 Um, I suppose my most positive trait is my, um, positive outlook, I think, that, um, that things will happen, that things can happen, and that you can make things happen. I think, you know, being a filmmaker you have to have belief, you know, and you have to inspire belief in others, because they have to believe that you're going to make the money and believe that you're going to get the film up, and believe that you're the best person to tell the story, and, you know, so you have to be able to, um, you have to be a bit of a bullshit artist, and you have to have a strong belief in yourself, and I think the thing that helps me believe in myself is, you know, the fact that I'm telling Indigenous stories, because I feel like that's a great motivator, because there's so many stories that need to be told and communicated and, you know, other Indigenous people need the opportunities and so that's a real driver, so I think that feeds the belief that, you know, keeps me going and, um, yeah, gets others to back me up.

Rachel 14A/27:40 Yes, I am lucky I started young.

END TRANSCRIPT