

MARY TATERSALL AND PATRICIA KELLY



# STUDYGUIDE

ISSUE 29 AUSTRALIAN SCREEN EDUCATION

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# ORDINARY PEOPLE

One woman, One Nation, two forces collide

## SYNOPSIS

**F**ar right and anti-immigration politics are on the rise worldwide. In Australia, as in many other western countries, a new political force is drawing on the discontent of those who feel excluded from the promised benefits of globalization. Rejecting the new world order and its transformation of their economies and cultures, these people are convinced that traditional political parties no longer represent them or their interests. They are desperate to make their voices heard.



PHOTO: COLENE HUGHES

For Colene Hughes and her supporters, Pauline Hanson's One Nation party initially appears to offer a solution. It seems to promise true democracy, a way of knocking the country back into shape - giving people like them some power again. However, over time, their belief in the moral rightness of One Nation is confronted by the realities of the party's internal politics. Once Colene starts to question the authoritarian control of the party's executive members, the gloves come off. At the annual general meeting, the two factions collide.

This revealing documentary follows Colene through two years and two election campaigns as a One Nation candidate in Ipswich, Queensland, heartland of One Nation. It travels with her on the campaign trail as her idealistic fervour slowly turns to disillusionment. It also gives the viewer an unparalleled look at One Nation - from the inside. As the film takes us

into homes, member gatherings, party rallies, branch meetings and social events, we meet the 'ordinary people' who have flocked to Pauline Hanson's call to save the nation and we hear, in their own words, their grievances and aspirations.

The film offers a rare inside view of the 'ordinary people' behind Hanson's rise and offers insights into why they rallied to Hanson's cause and some of the consequences of that involvement. Dr Jennifer Rutherford's research in making this documentary has made possible the record of a unique era in Australian political and cultural life. It has ongoing relevance locally and in an increasing number of countries that face the ongoing challenges of prejudice and racism.

#### CURRICULUM LINKS

This film has relevance for tertiary studies in areas such as Political Studies,

History, Media Studies and Cultural Studies. It could also be a useful resource for trainers in areas of anti-racism, for government departments, researchers/policy advisers, local councils, and a variety of Indigenous groups.

NOTE: Some of the views expressed by participants in the documentary could be highly offensive. For this reason, we recommend that you preview the film to establish its suitability for your intended use. Any group using the documentary for study purposes needs to prepare by agreeing on issues such as respectful listening and respectful talking and appropriate ways of dealing with any disagreement or anger in discussing controversial issues.

#### KEY TERMS

DINKUM AUSSIE, RACISM, DEMOCRACY, FASCISM, NEO-NAZISM, THE FAR RIGHT, FABIAN SOCIALISTS, NA-

TIONALISM, CAPITALISM, FEMINIST, ABORIGINALITY, STOLEN GENERATION, MULTICULTURALISM, PREJUDICE, XENOPHOBIA, HOMOPHOBIA, BIGOTRY, CULTURAL IDENTITY, DIVERSITY, GLOBALIZATION

We use these terms often, but there are many and differing understandings of them. It is useful to investigate and agree on a common understanding in order to have effective discussions about the issues in this film.

### ABOUT MAKING THE FILM

*Ordinary People* is the result of collaboration between academic, Dr Jennifer Rutherford, and film-makers Martha Ansara and Kit Guyatt. Rutherford holds a Ph.D. in Sociology and Social Anthropology from the University of New South Wales and has published extensively on racism, nationalism and Australian culture. She was foundation convenor of the Australian Studies Program at the Australian National University from 1994 to 1998, a Research Fellow in the School of Cultural Studies and Critical Theory at Macquarie University from 1998 to 2001 and is currently Research Fellow at the University of Sydney's Department of English, Art History, Media and Film.

Dr Rutherford was funded to research the One Nation party as part of her longstanding interest in nationalism, racism and cultural identity. Initial research gave her access to One Nation events closed to other non-members. She was possibly the only Australian researcher to have such access and with the help of an amateur documentary team, she began documenting One Nation's bid for power. Shooting began in May 1998, on the eve of the Queensland state election. The resulting 100 hours of film, plus the film-makers' input, has resulted in this documentary—up close and personal with One Nation.

The documentary is based on three years research and dialogue with members of the Ipswich branch of One

Nation, without whose cooperation this historical record would not exist. Regardless of her own views, Rutherford recognized this group of people as deserving attention:

*Recent events have demonstrated that the Pauline Hanson phenomenon is not likely to go away. In this regard, Australia is not alone. The success of the Far Right in garnering popular support in France, Belgium, Austria and Italy has demonstrated the emergence within industrial countries of a new political constituency, an under-class who have lost their traditional forms of political representation and who no longer identify with the traditional polarities of right and left. A class excluded from the gains of late capitalism and globalization and yet bearing most of its consequences in job and market insecurity. A class which, in the absence of any other political force to represent them, finds an appeal and identification in the anti-elitist, nationalist and xenophobic discourses of the Far Right. The persistence of Hansonism has demonstrated the tenacity of this constituency in Australia, albeit with a different historical location and orientation.*

*I decided fairly early that the starting premise of Ordinary People would have to be one of recognizing the subjectivity and dignity of Hanson's supporters and the necessity of entering into dialogue with them. I couldn't see any point in creating another text that speaks exclusively to those already convinced of the wrong-headedness of Hanson's views. I wanted to create a work that enters into dialogue with One Nation supporters; and my encounter with Colene provided a way of achieving this.*

*In Ordinary People, Colene presents us with, if you like, what the French philosopher Michel Foucault termed an experience-livre: a text that stops its readers in their tracks, forcing them to think anew, to think differently. Colene invites us into an encounter with the thuggery and brutality of the Far Right from the inside. Identifying with Colene, the audience is taken on a quite extraordinary journey into the dark heart of the new fascism.*

*My role, as I have attempted to construct it within the film's narration, has been to follow Colene's journey and raise questions, questions that contextualize and illuminate the political/symbolic field of the new fascism without closing off the interpretive task for the audience.*

### THEMES, DISCUSSION POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

There are many possible issues to discuss in relation to this documentary. The following are only a selection.

#### 1. DOCUMENTING 'DIFFICULT' ISSUES

Jennifer Rutherford: 'I couldn't see any point in creating another text that speaks exclusively to those already convinced of the wrong-headedness of Hanson's views.'

- What are the positive aspects of Rutherford's point of view in this comment? Is there an opposing argument? Organize a debate on this issue.

Rutherford says, 'My role...has been to follow Colene's journey and raise questions...that contextualise and illuminate the political/symbolic field of the new fascism without closing off the interpretive task for the audience.'

- What evidence can you provide to show that she succeeded or failed in this task? What have you learned from her interpretation of Colene's journey?
- From the documentary, what insights have you gained about Pauline Hanson, her executive and the role of One Nation in Australian politics?
- What evidence can you find to justify the labelling of Far Right organizations as 'thugs' and 'brutal', either in Australia or overseas? Research and present a small case study of a Far Right organization.

#### 2. ONE NATION PARTY MEMBERS

THE CANDIDATE: COLENE HUGHES

Colene Hughes joins Pauline Hanson's One Nation party believing that she is going to 'restore' democracy to Australia, but gradually becomes disillusioned by One Nation's agenda. Colene's journey is a mental, physical



and emotional journey with the mythic qualities of a quest:

- Colene has a cause in which she believes passionately.
  - She engages in a struggle on its behalf.
  - She faces many obstacles along the way. She overcomes some.
  - The forces against her prove too strong and she has to retreat.
- Identify the stages of Colene's 'quest'. What are the highs and lows for her? When does disillusionment set in? How does she respond? If she were your friend, what advice would you give her? Write her a letter or an email to this effect.
  - What are some of the new social terrains that Colene and her supporters have to enter and negotiate, as you observe them in the documentary?
  - In Colene's quest, what are the roles

of Pauline Hanson and her executive members, David Oldfield and David Ettridge?

- What does Colene's suburb, house, car and kitchen reveal about her social status? Consider aspects such as furnishings, appliances and cupboard contents. Is she an 'ordinary Australian'?

Colene's appearance changes dramatically throughout the documentary.

- What do you think was the intended effect of her public image? Can you identify other federal or state politicians who have changed their image? How have they achieved this?

THE LEADER: PAULINE HANSON

- What assumptions lie behind the emphasis given to the fact that Pauline

Hanson was a 'fish and chip shop owner'? Research the role this fact played in media coverage of her 1998 campaign.

Pauline Hanson: *'Australia is my home and the Australian people are my children'*.

- What effect do you think Pauline Hanson intended in making this statement?

Colene: *Having Pauline say, 'I feel like a mother of a nation'...that is so absurd. That is so arrogant. You know you have this ignorant, arrogant woman running around...Everyone's going, 'Oh, my God!' (Laughs) Oh, please, somebody put a sock in it.*

- How do you explain Colene's reaction to Hanson's comments?
- How does it compare with your own reaction?



PHOTO: COLENE HUGHES.

There are several narratives embedded in the film. These are stories within stories.

- Trace Pauline Hanson's rise, fall and attempt to reinvent herself and the crisis-ridden history of the One Nation party.
- What are the main events in these stories? What are the stumbling blocks and stepping-stones on the way?

### 3. ONE NATION AND DEMOCRACY

One Nation Party seems to offer a solution to people like Colene and her supporters. They think it is true democracy, which will give people like them some power again. The reality proves to be different.

- Discuss the principles of democracy and of democratic processes.
- Consider the scene in which David Oldfield nominates Pauline Hanson for national president of the party. Analyze this election process in detail. Now compare it with the accepted rules for voting in a mainstream political party or the accepted rules for voting in a president in any organization you know.
- What problems are associated with voting by a show of hands, in any context?

Comment on the following statements about democracy, made by various One Nation supporters in this film. To what extent could these statements be regarded as generalizations?

- Colene says, *We don't live in some sort of maniacal monarchy. We live in a democracy.*
- In the car park scene, Quarmby says, *and everybody was allowed to have their say.*
- Oldfield says to Colene, *Democracy has been demonstrated to you in such overwhelming numbers...*

### 4. POLITICS IN ACTION

Colene: *I...conned myself. Because I wanted so much to believe that it was what I wanted it to be.*

Bob Watson, Colene's campaign manager: *History doesn't record all the little people that stood by certain things.*

Colene: *Financially, I've got a house that's not finished. (Laughs) Emotionally it's cost me two years of my life. And it's taken a toll on me personally, in my personal life.*

- What happens to unsuccessful party candidates like Colene? Check with local branches of political parties or use their websites to discover what the process is for becoming a candidate at local government, state or federal levels. What sacrifices and work are involved in the process and what support is available before and after an election for a successful or unsuccessful candidate?
- What impacts does this process have on any political candidate's work, family and personal life?

### 5. ORDINARY PEOPLE'S CONCERNS: LOCAL AND GLOBAL

#### IPSWICH, QUEENSLAND

Ipswich is now virtually an outer suburb of Brisbane, but in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was an independent convict settlement.

- Research the demographic and socio-economic profile of Ipswich and other areas with strong support for the One Nation party. Identify any common factors that may influence this voting choice.
- Identify features of Pauline Hanson's speech that may have enabled her to appeal to this group of people.

Colene: *Ipswich has been largely ignored for the last twenty five or thirty years...*

Colene on the decline of Queensland industry and the rise in unemployment: *The World Bank really has done this to this country. You cannot control a country that doesn't owe you money.*

Watson: *The Labor Party isn't the Labor Party that I believe in and I grew up with... Every one of them was a working man—not an educated twerp.*

- How would you respond in a discussion, to the above comments?
- What do you think lies behind Bob Watson's anger as expressed in his criticism, *not an educated twerp*?
- Prepare a role-play in which you continue these discussions using arguments based on careful research.

#### FAR RIGHT MOVEMENTS

The increasing popularity of Far Right movements is a global phenomena in many countries where workers have been excluded or left behind by technical advances and as a result suffer most from job insecurity, poor pay etc.

The Public Eye website at [www.publiceye.org](http://www.publiceye.org) offers a scholarly approach to studying various issues. It is the website of Political Research Associates, an independent, non-profit research centre in the US that serves as a resource for information on anti-democratic, authoritarian and other oppressive movements and trends.

- Find three examples of Far Right movements outside Australia.
- What are the problems experienced by these people that may have led them to feel disenfranchised and angry?



## RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

Since *Ordinary People* was made, terrorists attacked the World Trade Center towers in New York, with enormous loss of life. Attacks began soon after on Muslims and mosques in Australia. This short article was taken from the ABC News website. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newslink/nat/newsnat-17sep2001-36.htm>

Monday September 17, 2001

A strong police presence has marked the opening of a new mosque by Brisbane's Islamic community. It follows the recent firebombing of a mosque in Brisbane last week in the wake of the American attack. There have also been threatening phone calls, graffiti attacks and the stoning of a school bus carrying Muslim children. The Ambassador from Saudi Arabia was to have attended the opening but the meeting was told he had been ordered not to appear in public. However, Senator George Brandis was there to deliver a message from the Prime Minister. *It's particularly important on an occasion like this to embrace them, to emphasize that what defines an Australian today is our diversity, our respect for each other, in a society which is defined by diversity of cultures, a diversity of faiths and if one of those cultures and one of those faiths is attacked, then we're all diminished by it*, he said.

- What does the Prime Minister's statement supporting respect for diversity mean to you? Who is a diversity role model for you and for whom may you be a diversity role model?
- Prepare a wall chart or poster suggesting positive actions each of us can take in everyday life to work for peaceful and harmonious communities.

## 6. RACISM

'Racism is a belief that one's perceived superiority is a consequence

of genetic superiority. One is believed to be born superior.' (G. Partington & V. McCudden, *Ethnicity and Education*, Social Science Press, Wentworth Falls, 1992, p. 188.)

The old school chant goes, 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me', but in real life it can be different. Words can hurt people and where racist words occur, sticks and stones are close behind. Racism and racist comments are ugly; they need to be faced and dealt with.

Racism may be easy to define, but what does it mean to those who are the victims and the perpetrators?

- Think of a time when you have witnessed an act of racism or have been the victim of such an act. What are the feelings associated with this?

### RACISM AND REFUGEES

Unidentified man: *What this government should be doing is picking on a small boat which has 20 or 30 people...have a video going, blast them out of the water and send that video across to... play in every household...*

Colene: *If they were true refugees, if their life was in danger...Why don't they just go across the Mediterranean to Europe?...Why are they getting on a boat and coming all the way out here?*

- Unpack what these comments would really mean in terms of government and personal decisions and actions.
- Find out about Australia's obligations under international law and human rights legislation.

Investigate the statistics on refugees worldwide.

- Who are the world's refugees? Where are they moving from and to? What is causing this mass movement of people across borders? What impact is it having on other countries receiving or rejecting refugees?
- How has the Australian government

responded to the most recent refugees attempting to reach Australia by boat? Use newspaper archives and other research to find information on the 'boat people' from Vietnam who arrived in the 1970s and 1980s. How similar or different are the current responses to refugees?

- What are the differences between entry to Australia for 'refugees' and 'economic migrants'?
- When people use the term 'queue jumper', what do they mean? What are the facts of Australia's policy on refugees?

All non-Indigenous Australians have either migrated to Australia or have ancestors who migrated to Australia for various reasons.

- If this applies to you, research your own family history for the reasons they came to Australia. What was happening in your family's country (or countries) of origin to make them want to leave their homes forever? Present the information you feel comfortable about sharing.

Watch a video called *Admission Impossible*, available from Film Australia. This documentary uses documents and personal accounts to trace Australia's resistance to immigration of people perceived to be 'undesirable' by reason of colour, ethnicity or religion.

- Write a review of this or a similar program for a student or community newsletter or website.

### RACISM AND INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

Racism often talks in terms of 'blood'. There are some comments to this effect in *Ordinary People*. A One Nation supporter asserts, *Cathy Freeman should never carry the Aboriginal flag...It was the white blood that's in her that made her run.*

- Talk to a biologist about blood or conduct your own research. How does physiology illuminate our understanding of blood? Invite the

blood bank to discuss the topic. Design an anti-racist campaign around blood donations.

- What is meant by 'Aboriginality'?
- Visit an Aboriginal cultural centre to investigate another version of Australian history. How have the writings of modern historians such as Henry Reynolds and the works of film-makers such as John Pilger changed our understandings of Australian history?
- Read and share reviews on books, stories, plays and videos by and about Indigenous Australians.
- Identify common myths about special treatment of Indigenous people and compare these with the facts, e.g. health statistics, poverty, education, rates of imprisonment.

#### RACISM AND LESSONS FROM HISTORY

Colene: ...*calling us fascists and Nazis and all this sort of weird talk is really unwarranted because there is nothing Fascist about the organization. There is nothing Neo-Nazi about the organization.*

- Research the issues, prepare your case for or against the truth of Colene's statement and present it to a group 'jury'. The following discussion points may help you to begin.

#### RACISM AND NAZISM

[Note: The study of the rise of Nazism in Germany has relevance for students of history and politics at secondary and tertiary levels. In researching Nazism, students will come across extremely disturbing and distressing comments and information. As a writer of this guide, I was appalled at the degree of loathing and hatred that Neo-Nazis write to anyone who is against them. The other apparent factors revealed in Neo-Nazi writing are their poor writing skills and apparent lack of formal education. PK]

- Watch films such as *Sophie's Choice* and *Schindler's List*. These are, of necessity, sanitized modern ver-

sions of the reality, but they can provide at least some personalized understanding of the planned mass murder that was the Holocaust.

- Watch the documentary *Uncle Chatzkel* which tells Chatzkel Lemchen's story of survival through the Russian revolution, two world wars, the Holocaust, a communist regime and the transition of Lithuania from Soviet republic to an independent state. (See study guide in ASE Issue 26/27, 2001)
- Visit Jewish memorial or information centres in your capital city. If you are in Sydney, visit the Sydney Jewish Museum (corner of Darlinghurst Rd and Burton St).
- Visit the web site of the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook43.html> This is part of Manuscripts and Archives, at Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University. It contains over 4,100 videotaped interviews with witnesses and survivors of the Holocaust. These are people from all backgrounds and include German citizens who observed what was happening.
- Visit <http://www.vwc.edu/~dgraf/nazidocs.txt>. This site contains translations of chilling Nazi documents, including an account-style ledger of executions in one area in Vilnius between July and November, 1941, when a total of 137,346 murders were meticulously and proudly entered.
- Research Hitler's rise to power. Who were his supporters? What part did men like Joseph Goebbels play? What was happening in Germany and Europe at the time? Who were the Nazis? Who were their scapegoats? Research the origins of this term.
- Who are One Nation's 'scapegoats'? Find evidence through this film and other documentaries, speeches and Hansard reports.

#### RACISM AND SYMBOLISM

The use of symbolism has always been important to political

movements. To see one example from a Far Right group, visit <http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/holocaust/h-dach-early.htm>

This site shows a Nazi chart of the cloth patches sewn on clothing to identify inmates of concentration camps.

*The horizontal categories show the designated markings for the following types of prisoners: (from left to right) political, professional criminal, emigrant, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexual, Germans shy of work, and other nationalities shy of work. The vertical categories begin with the basic colors, and then show those for repeat offenders, prisoners in punishment kommandos, Jews, Jews who have violated racial laws by having sexual relations with Aryans, and Aryans who violated racial laws by having sexual relations with Jews.*

- What do these identified 'criminal' groups reveal about racism in action in Nazi Germany?
- What symbolism does One Nation use in its party material, web site and campaigning? What emotions do they want to encourage?

Colene: *maybe you could show her (Pauline) a picture of Hitler sitting on the corner of the desk with the swastika draped around his shoulders and a picture of her with the Australian flag draped round her.*

- In each case, what is the symbolism of draping themselves in their respective flags?

One lone Vietnamese-Australian woman appears in a One Nation crowd. Pauline 'hugs' her for the camera.

- Compare the symbolism of this act with her speech criticizing *race-based policy and the destruction of our national pride and heritage through inappropriate immigration and the segregation that is multiculturalism.*
- What do you think is meant by this statement?



## RACISM AND 'ASIANS'

Pauline Hanson: *I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians.*

- How useful is the term 'Asians'? Who does Pauline Hanson mean by this term?
- What is the value judgement behind the use of the word 'swamped'?
- Identify as many cultures as possible in the Asian region. Find out about some cultural similarities and differences. What sub-cultures exist within each identified culture?

Val is a One Nation supporter whose main complaint is that *new suburbs ...are typically oriental suburbs ... At the moment they're new and clean, but you can see what they're going to become...all these little houses'll have clothes hanging on the line. ...To us as English, that's an untidy.*

- What is Val frightened of? What is an appropriate response to comments such as this?
- Trace Australia's changing attitudes and policies regarding 'Asians' since Federation.
- Investigate and report on the contributions of one of the many different Asian communities to modern Australia. Include areas such as health, sport, the arts and education.

## 8. PARTY POLICIES

Select a policy area (e.g. multiculturalism, refugees) to research and use the web sites of these Australian political organizations:

AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS  
[www.democrats.org.au](http://www.democrats.org.au)

AUSTRALIAN GREENS  
[www.greens.org.au](http://www.greens.org.au)

AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY  
[www.alp.org.au](http://www.alp.org.au)

AUSTRALIANS FOR CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY  
[www.norepublic.com.au](http://www.norepublic.com.au)

LIBERAL PARTY OF AUSTRALIA  
[www.liberal.org.au](http://www.liberal.org.au)

NATIONAL PARTY OF AUSTRALIA  
[www.nationalparty.org](http://www.nationalparty.org)

ONE NATION  
[www.onenation.com.au](http://www.onenation.com.au)

- Assess the amount and depth of information available on each site. Discuss the similarities and differences. Summarize the main findings and present these to the study group.

## 7. FILM TECHNIQUE

What film-making techniques are used to create mood, underscore points or to highlight issues in the documentary? Look for close-ups, slow motion, special effects, cutting between opposing characters or groups, use of other media such as newspaper headlines and songs.

Music is important in creating the mood of any film.

- What various roles does it play in *Ordinary People*? What different kinds of music can you identify? What do you associate with each musical style? How does it reinforce or challenge One Nation's message?
- What do you associate with 1950s music and dance style evident in the fund-raising dance held for One Nation in Ipswich?

## POSTSCRIPT

In January 2002, Pauline Hanson resigned as President of Pauline Hanson's One Nation party.

Any references to the name 'One Nation' used in this study guide relate to the organization incorporated as Pauline Hanson's One Nation.

Colene Hughes is now a member of Australians for Constitutional Monarchy.

## FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

There are various web sites cited in the text to help you begin your research into the areas referred to in this documentary.

In addition, reports from Hansard and other information about Australian federal parliament is available from the Parliament of Australia web site at [www.aph.gov.au](http://www.aph.gov.au)

M. Kingston, *Off the Rails: The Pauline Hanson Trip*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edn.) Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2001

A look at the rise, fall and rise again of Pauline Hanson and One Nation, as well as the symbiotic relationships between politicians and the press.

E. Margolis (ed.), *The Hidden Curriculum in Higher Education*, Routledge, New York, 2001.

This is a useful introduction to understanding the role of hidden curricular in maintaining inequities in higher education.

G. Weinstein & K. Obear, 'Bias Issues in the Classroom: Encounters with the Teaching Self', *New Directions in Teaching and Learning*, no. 52, winter 1992, pp. 39-50.

This article introduces the idea of 'triggers' in working within critical areas in education. It is helpful for educators who want to examine their own role in anti-bias education and who want to bring about changes in their own attitudes and those of students.

Queensland Government, *Diversity: A Queensland Portrait*, Multicultural Affairs Queensland, 1999.

This publication shows statistics relating to where Queenslanders have come from but also shows snapshots of the people behind the statistics. It is an ex-





COLENE HUGHES WITH WRITER/DIRECTOR, DR. JENNIFER RUTHERFORD

cellent factual portrait of the cultural diversity that is one Australian state.

### ORDINARY PEOPLE

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**WRITER/DIRECTOR/CO-PRODUCER**

Jennifer Rutherford

**PRODUCER:**

Martha Ansara

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER:**

Stefan Moore

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Lindfield NSW 2070  
tel 02 9413 8634  
fax 02 9416 9401  
email [sales@filmaust.com.au](mailto:sales@filmaust.com.au)  
[www.filmaust.com.au](http://www.filmaust.com.au)

