

# FRANKLIN

A JOURNEY TO THE PAST  
A QUEST FOR THE FUTURE

SCREEN AUSTRALIA PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL PREMIERE FUND,  
SCREEN TASMANIA, FILM VICTORIA AND 791 CROWDFUNDING SUPPORTERS "FRANKLIN"

FEATURING OLIVER CASSIDY AND HUGO WEAVING

SOUND DESIGNER EMMA BORTIGNON COMPOSER LUKE ALTMANN CINEMATOGRAPHER BENJAMIN BRYAN EDITED BY KASIMIR BURGESS AND JOHANNA SCOTT

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS NELSON KHOURY AND SILVA HENENBERG LINE PRODUCER ANNIE VENABLES CO-PRODUCER OLIVER CASSIDY

PRODUCED BY CHRIS KAMEN WRITTEN BY KASIMIR BURGESS, CLAIRE SMITH AND NATASHA PINCUS DIRECTED BY KASIMIR BURGESS



[franklinriver.movie](http://franklinriver.movie)

# Franklin

**Press Kit**  
as at 4 April 2022

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The producers wish to acknowledge the palawa / pakana of trowunna / lutruwita (Tasmania). We pay our deepest respects to elders past and present on whose land this story was filmed. We stand in solidarity with the First Peoples of this country who continue to defend land and waters from colonisation. Sovereignty has never been ceded.



**Tagline:**

A Journey to the Past. A Quest for the Future.

**One Liner (20 words):**

An epic rafting adventure to retrace the story of Australia's most significant environmental battle: the saving of the Franklin River.

**Short synopsis (137 words):**

Eighth-generation Tasmanian and environmentalist Oliver Cassidy embarks on a life-changing solo rafting trip down the beautiful yet remote Franklin River. His goal is to retrace his late father's 14-day expedition to attend the blockade that helped save the World-Heritage listed national park from being destroyed by a huge hydroelectric dam project in the early 1980s.

Featuring never-before-seen archival footage and interviews with key players such as Bob Brown and Uncle Jim Everett, the eight-year-long 'Franklin campaign' is revealed as the most significant environmental protest in Australia's history; an inspiring example of the power of non-violent direct action to bring about lasting change.

Physically challenged beyond his limits, Oliver's journey is one of healing and deeper understanding as he searches for the right way to say 'goodbye' to his father.



## Long synopsis (671 words):

*Franklin* is a visually stunning feature-length documentary about Australia's most significant environmental campaign: the seven-year battle to save Tasmania's World-Heritage listed Franklin River from being dammed by a hydroelectric project in the early 1980s.

The story is told through the eyes of Oliver Cassidy, a musician, activist, transgender person and 8th generation Tasmanian. Oliver still grieves from the early passing of his environmentalist father Michael who died from bile duct cancer seven years ago. Mike left Oliver a few symbolic possessions, including his paddle, ice pick and snow shovel — handing down a challenge. Mike also left a diary from his days as an early and key activist in the Franklin campaign, containing vivid details of the 14-day journey Mike took down the river itself with his closest friends to the dam site blockade where he, along with 1271 other people, were arrested for demonstrating.

Not ready to let him go, Oliver decides to follow his father's footsteps and embark on an ambitious solo rafting adventure down the river to retrace Mike's expedition.

On the river and reading through Mike's diary, Oliver gains a new understanding of the campaign's legacy and its relevance to today's environmental battles.

The stories of the key players of the campaign emerge through intimate interviews and never-seen-before archive footage. Campaign leader Bob Brown recalls his first life-changing experience of paddling the Franklin way back in 1976, which inspired him to not only save the river but dedicate the rest of his life to environmental politics and activism. Construction worker Kevin Bailey explains the view of the pro-dam side who wanted jobs for their families and economic development for Tasmania's impoverished West Coast. Wilderness Society organiser Geoff Law provides insight into the high-stakes machinations of the seven-year struggle that neither side could afford to lose. The First Nations fight to protect their cultural heritage on the river as Kutikina Cave is explored in interviews with Uncle Jim Everett and Aunty Patsy Cameron. Upriver activists Lisa Yeates, Tim Morris and Benny Zable provide entertaining yet revealing anecdotes about putting on a show for the media whilst surviving for months on end in the remote rainforest of south-west Tasmania.

Back on the river, the pilgrimage tests Oliver more than he has ever been tested before. The memory of Mike, voiced by Hugo Weaving, reminds Oliver; 'Once you're on the river there's no turning back, only one way home'. Pushing through exhaustion, cold and hunger — and still recovering from his recent gender affirmation surgery — Oliver sees himself anew amongst the broader diversity of life in an extraordinary landscape.

The historic story climaxes on "Green Day", or "G-Day", just days before the 1983 Australian Federal Election. The activists pulled together for one last push to prove to the world 'we're still here' and to convince the citizens watching on in their lounge rooms across Australia to vote to save the river. Bob Hawke wins in a landslide and vows to stop the dam. But the State of Tasmania digs in and takes the issue all the way to the High Court. History is made as the court's decision is eventually handed down and the greenies celebrate. But even then as it is now, the struggle to protect the environment was not over.

Under the direction of award-winning Kasimir Burgess (*Fell*, *The Leunig Fragments*), and with stunning 4K cinematography from Benjamin Bryan, the film provides a breathtakingly beautiful front row seat to Oliver's intrepid river journey. We also find moments to 'come up for air' and simply marvel at the timeless beauty of the naturally tannin-stained river and the thriving ecosystem that envelops it. This stepping between the macro and the micro, the past and the present, subtly paints a picture of the beautiful and the complex. It's a timeless portrait of the Franklin River which has flowed free to the sea for thousands of years — and thanks to a generation of activists — continues to do so.



**Kasimir Burgess - Director & Writer**

Born 1<sup>st</sup> December 1980 in Melbourne

Folio + Showreel: <https://vimeo.com/user7424070>

Kasimir's debut feature film *Fell* had its world premiere in Official Competition at Sydney International Film Festival and garnered critical acclaim from publications including the Hollywood Reporter and Screen Daily. His shorts have screened in over thirty countries at festivals including Berlin, Locarno, Stockholm and Melbourne International. In 2005, Lou Reed, Judy Dench and Anton Corbijn awarded *Booth Story* Film of The Festival at Raindance (UK). In 2008 George Lucas awarded *Directions* Best Short at Tiburon (USA). In 2011 Kasimir won the Crystal Bear at The Berlinale for *Lily*.

Kasimir's collaborative work with artists such as Ellen Jose, Julia Ciccarone, Gregory Crewdson and Missy Higgins has been screened and collected by the NGV, Heide, Melbourne Arts Centre, ACMI, SBS and ABC. His documentary work in the Pacific has screened at the UN and The Sydney Opera House as part of Tedx and The World Conference For The Rights of People with Disabilities. His previous feature documentary, *The Leunig Fragments*, screened in competition at both the 2019 Sydney and Melbourne International Film Festivals. It was released in cinemas nationwide in 2020 and followed by high ratings on the ABC.



### **Oliver Cassidy, Principal cast and Co-Producer**

Oliver has had a wide ranging career in the arts, beginning in Australia's longest running play *The Ship That Never Was*, before moving to Queensland to study film. His short film *Lola The Magnificent* won several awards including Best Film at the QNFA in 2010. Oliver also won Best music Video at the inaugural Online Video Awards for Phantom Hitmen's *Beautiful Mind* - a first of its kind made using the principles of Lean Filmmaking. Oliver freelanced in film and TV production in Brisbane, the Gold Coast and Melbourne before *Franklin* drew him back to Tasmania, where he took up a thematically related job at the Tasmanian Conservation Trust.



Oliver rediscovered a love of music, primarily playing piano, with a bit of piano accordion, flute and melodica in *Philomath* - a "band with the philosophy of music risk-taking and working in concert to discover a path to transportative harmony". *Philomath* have had performances at festivals such as MONA FOMA and are regulars on stages around Hobart.

Music brought Oliver back full circle to the theatre as a regular performer at Hobart's QT Cabaret. This led him into music directorship in Hobart Comedy Tours' *Sailor And The Bawd* at the 2019 Festival of Voices, and Tasmanian Theatre Company's production of Leo J Skilbeck's *Joan*. Oliver has just finished a two year stint as the executive producer of the Tasmanian Theatre Company and is looking forward to where the wind will take him next.

## Chris Kamen, Producer

With over 17 years in the film industry, Chris has a broad business, legal and creative skillset spanning film and TV production, distribution and marketing.

*Franklin* represents the pinnacle of Chris' filmmaking career to date. Whilst he has produced a lot of short form content and low budget documentaries, *Franklin* is the most ambitious project he has attempted. It has been a labour of love for seven years and Chris is now eager to share it - and the environmental messages it contains - with the world.

Previously Chris has pioneered digital-first distribution methods on a number of niche-oriented feature-length documentaries including refugee impact film *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* (2011), tiny house documentary *Small is Beautiful* (2015) and science film *Vitmania* (2018). Chris works part time in business affairs at leading Australian production company CJZ. He also works as an IP and entertainment lawyer at Hyper Legal.



## Claire Smith, Writer

Claire is a documentary writer, producer and director specialising in human health and environmentalism. She has been working with the team on *Franklin* since 2017 and spent much of lockdown holed up in London researching and writing it. She has made documentaries for various broadcasters including Netflix, BBC, Channel 4, ABC, SBS and Discovery. In her spare time she makes short films for environmental groups including global literary initiative *Letters to the Earth*. While in Australia, she worked in-house for 3 years for ABC's flagship science show *Catalyst*, before moving on to become a producer for the ABC/Netflix medical series *Ask the Doctor* and then to Genepool Productions where she worked on the feature-length documentary *Vitmania*. In 2018 she moved back to the UK where she directed several crime documentaries for Discovery, developed an environmental feature documentary for ITN and produced *Australia on Fire: Climate Emergency* for UK broadcaster Channel 4.







### **Natasha Pincus, Writer**

Natasha has written more than 20 feature film and TV scripts for projects in Australia and the US, including adapting the Pulitzer-nominated novel *Snow Child* for Tangerine Entertainment and co-writing *The Twisted* for Ridley Scott's Scott Free Productions. Her screenplay *Middle Of The Air* was a winner of the UCLA Screenwriting Contest and her screenplay *Clive* was included on the US Hollywood Blacklist and was a Semi-Finalist of the Nicholl Fellowship. Natasha wrote the feature film *Fell*, directed by Kasimir Burgess, which premiered In Competition at the Sydney Film Festival. Natasha is currently writing the feature film adaptation of acclaimed novel *Symphony For The Man* for Sparkplug Films, an original sci-fi drama *North Star* for Factor 30 Films, and creating her TV series *Mary Mary* for Maximo Entertainment.

## Creative Statement by Oliver Cassidy

Most of 2012 is a blur. In some un-recallable order, I moved from Tasmania to Melbourne, and more-or-less back again, in a short period of time. I rented a terrace house I couldn't afford with my new fiancé in one town and in another I shared with mum the caring of my beloved and terminally ill father. It was a year of wanting it all to be over but never wanting it to end. At some point in the middle of this fog, I got a phone call.

It was my old wilderness-photographer friend, Wolfgang Glowacki, and his mate, Elias Eichler. The latter had just started his business, Franklin River Rafting, and they were interested in making a 'source to sea' video to honour the much loved river. I asked each of them what the river meant to them personally, suggesting that including a human story would give the piece broader appeal.

I knew what my example would be. This conversation came soon after I had borne witness to my father and a group his life-long friends commemorating a life of wilderness adventures with a slide show, reading of diary excerpts, and a few drams of whisky. The bonds between these friends, forged on their adventures, were the strongest I'd ever witnessed, and had all begun at a public meeting and subsequent 14-day rafting trip to save the Franklin River.

"Okay, make that!" said my friends on the phone.

Early in my research, I discovered David Lowe, another filmmaker with Franklin River research already compiled for a film that had not yet got off the ground. He didn't know me from a bar of soap, but when I phoned him, he invited me up to Northern NSW for a weekend, to dig through his resources, and spit ball ideas. It was an incredible introduction to the topic for which I am very grateful. Next I found Chris Kamen: energetic, outdoorsy producer and lawyer who'd become fascinated by the Franklin since learning about the high court case of 1983 upon which the river's fate had hung. Chris then introduced me to Kasimir Burgess, director and visual poet who was struck, among other things, by the images of flowing protestors converging with a flowing river.

Upon moving back to Tasmania, my research revealed another convergence: the meeting of the white campaigners and First Nations campaigners. It shouldn't be assumed that their goals were the same, but in this instance they definitely overlapped. Although the discovery of Kutikina Cave had been very useful in the area's World Heritage nomination, the people with the greatest connection to this country were at best under-sung and at worst ignored in the usual telling of this



history. I am grateful to Uncle Jim Everett and Aunty Patsy Cameron, Ruth Langford, Fiona Hamilton, and others with whom we checked in at various stages across the making of the film. Ours is not an indigenous story but their perspectives are essential. These incredible people nudged us back on the right path when our ignorance got the better of us, and ultimately trusted us with the story - as much as it is ours to tell.

As a writer though, I floundered somewhat in the face of two great challenges. One was writing myself into the story. The other was having collected enough stories about the Franklin River to fill a 13 part series, falling in love with at least 6 hours worth and needing that to fit into 90 minutes. It was at this point that Chris and I decided to get some help in the form of writer, Claire Smith.



I had been working at the Tasmanian Conservation Trust, thinking a lot about what goes in to bringing about change. This was exactly the question Claire was inspired to tackle. The potential for the story of the Franklin River campaign to be a useful guide for tackling all the issues of today - from those affecting small community groups through to climate change itself - was not lost on us. With Claire's tough love, we extracted some gems, respectfully laid aside some favourites, and completed the awe-inspiring task of crafting the beast into a coherent form.

The river today, the ancient history, the narrative of my late father, the aboriginal campaign, the environmentalist campaign - so many threads to weave together! And yet an additional complexity lay in wait. Chris

and I were with Bob Brown and Jenny Webber, explaining to Jenny who my Dad had been when Bob gestured to me and said "its like we are in the room with him right now". I can barely begin to explain how simultaneously elated and utterly terrified I was to be so compared to my father. Because that was the weekend I was wrestling with coming out to Chris as a transgender person.

I was at that all-consuming stage of realisation when one genuinely doesn't know if one will survive the undeniable truth. Do I come out now and potentially commit an already complex film to being an unfundable Gordian knot, or do I stay hidden behind an old name and a female flesh suit perhaps never to be able to watch it, let alone promote it? Eventually fear of regret overcame fear of rejection and I went ahead with what I needed to do. After all, it was never going to work while pretending to be someone else.

Perhaps it was the exact right time in history, because no one else seemed to think it was a hinderance. Possibly the reverse.

In the week we launched our crowd funder, I came out to 1600 people at once. Not an experience I care to repeat, but it gave me a helpful metric. Precisely 0.125% of people were going to be unkind enough to make their negative views known. A majority of people didn't seem to care either way, and a solid third were explicitly welcoming or congratulatory.

The crowd funder trounced all our expectations. Not least I think because, in a time of inaction on catastrophic bush fires, we were asking an important question, 'what does it really take to bring about change?'. Whatever the motivation, it was proof that we had a story people wanted told.

In late 2020, miraculously in-between COVID-related border closures and probably too soon after my top surgery, we finally hit the water. It was honestly a hard slog and I unfortunately sustained an injury that will be with me the rest of my life. Of course much of this time is captured in my journal, on camera or both. But one of my favourite memories relates to Kasimir Burgess and our director of photography, Ben Bryan. If there was enough light to see their own hands, they were at work: under conditions with which most film crews will never need contend, on slippery rocks, over unfathomable black waters, and often in pouring rain. Their acrobatics were akin to mountain goats, and from that observation, whenever one of our number were in a particularly formidable predicament, we acknowledged it with a friendly bleat.

The challenge of weaving all the story threads together in the development phase was again faced in the year-long post production. We were in need of some fresh eyes. Those eyes belonged to writer, Natasha Pinkus. Natasha had been attached to the project briefly before Claire joined us and was a person with whom Kasimir had worked before. My debriefing with her about all our adventures was invaluable to me, as was her assistance to Kas. With all our years of weaving, the final tapestry is revealed.

The premiere of the film at the 2022 Melbourne International Film Festival is a decade to the month since my father's last breath. If he was still with us, this project might never have happened. And of course, if I had the choice, he would be. On one hand, he might not like being put in the spotlight. The importance of a story like the Franklin is that it never comes down to one individual. It is about people with a shared vision, or at least overlapping visions, working together, step by step, slog by slog. There are so many people to thank in the making of this film and so many more to thank for taking action, big and small. I am hoping that this story encourages you and many others to stand up and get organised for a better future. Should someone do that, I'm quite sure, my father would be proud.



## Director's Statement - Kasimir Burgess

From the outset, it was clear that the spectacular world heritage listed Franklin River and equally dramatic historical battle that took place upon it, offered an opportunity for a rousing, immersive archive driven cinematic experience. In the face of today's environmental crisis, the story felt prescient and so I dove in head first, excited and terrified at the prospect of filming on such an iconic river.

Although initially attracted to the historical story, it was to be the personal present-day story of a man on an epic river journey, coming to terms with the death of his father that compelled me to stay with the project over the nearly five gruelling years it took to make.



On his death bed, Oliver's father Mike gave Oliver his paddle from the trip he made to protest on the Franklin thirty-seven years earlier. In a sense it was passing the mantle - offering an opportunity for Oliver to see what had been saved. I found this incredibly moving, probably all the more so because my mother died the same year that Mike died. Oliver was searching for a way to test and define himself in a world without his main role model, and perhaps I was doing the same from behind the camera.

A key to being able to tell the Franklin story was to be found in Mike's Franklin river trip diary, which he also left to Oliver. As well as *Thin Red Line*-esque poetic observations of the Franklin's myriad of beautiful and terrifying places, Mike wrote about the campaign and the blockade which was to be the final destination of his trip. Throughout his river journey, Oliver writes his own story

but also reads Mike's diary. In a sense, bringing the past to life - offering Oliver and the audience an intimate first hand key into history. This allowed us an opportunity to celebrate the rich cache of archive footage in and around the seven-year campaign but also formed the film's emotional backbone of duelling river journey diaries; a father and son speaking to each other from beyond the grave.

I was only a few years old when the Franklin blockade took place and yet I have a strong memory of TV reports depicting the river from above, snaking off into a misty distance. Even in grainy 16mm on a tiny TV it appeared larger than life - like a mythic sentient being. Over the years it grew even larger in my imagination, particularly in the months before we were to put in and travel its full ten-day serpentine length.

Since the river was to be one of our main characters the team and I felt the weight of responsibility to capture something of its true nature; its soul. In the first few hours on the river, we realised that it was going to be the challenge of our lives. In the raging waters, not letting the river capture our own souls became the main goal - the river revealed itself only in glimpses before cameras were rushed into Pelican cases before they could be destroyed.

It would take over a year of editing to form some sense of the mercurial multi-faceted river as experienced by Oliver. The thing I enjoyed the most during this process was marrying our vivid 4K footage with the somewhat painterly super 8 and 16mm archive shot by legendary activist film makers such as Michael Cordell, Roger Scholes and Tom Haydon. It felt like collaboration; as with Oliver and his father, a conversation with the past to reveal something new.

## **CREDITS**

### **Presentation credits**

SCREEN AUSTRALIA presents in association with THE MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL PREMIERE FUND, SCREEN TASMANIA, FILM VICTORIA and 791 crowdfunding supporters "**FRANKLIN**" featuring OLIVER CASSIDY, HUGO WEAVING Sound Designer EMMA BORTIGNON Composer LUKE ALTMANN Cinematographer BENJAMIN BRYAN Edited by KASIMIR BURGESS and JOHANNA SCOTT Executive Producers NELSON KHOURY and SILVA HENENBERG Line Producer ANNIE VENABLES Co-producer OLIVER CASSIDY Produced by CHRIS KAMEN Written by KASIMIR BURGESS, CLAIRE SMITH and NATASHA PINCUS Directed by KASIMIR BURGESS

### **Full Credit listing**

SCREEN AUSTRALIA

presents in association with

THE MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL PREMIERE FUND

SCREEN TASMANIA

FILM VICTORIA

and

791 CROWDFUNDING SUPPORTERS

"FRANKLIN"

Directed by Kasimir Burgess

Written by Kasimir Burgess, Claire Smith and Natasha Pincus

Produced by Chris Kamen

Co-producer - Oliver Cassidy

Line Producer - Annie Venables

Executive Producers- Nelson Khoury and Silva Henenberg

Edited by Kasimir Burgess and Johanna Scott

Cinematographer - Benjamin Bryan

Composer - Luke Altmann

Sound Designer - Emma Bortignon

Featuring Hugo Weaving as the voice of Michael Cassidy

Interview participants (in alphabetical order):

Kevin Bailey  
Bob Brown  
Auntie Patsy Cameron  
Jill Cassidy  
Uncle Jim Everett  
Geoff Law  
Tim Morris  
Amanda (Sam) Stark  
Lisa Yeates  
Benny Zable

**Crew:**

Drone Operator Luke Tscharke

Additional Cinematography Kasimir Burgess

Sound Recordist Chris Kamen

Water Dolly Grip Dave Pile

Stills Photographer Francois Fourie

Development Producer Claire Smith

Impact Producers Bessie Byrne, Simon Murray

Archive Producer Kristie Barnett

Archive Researcher Heather Kirkpatrick

Archive Consultants Jill McCulloch  
Alice Hungerford

First Nations Consultant Fiona Hamilton

Gender Identity Consultant Teddy Darling

River Guides Franklin River Rafting  
Elias Eichler  
Eric Anderson  
Jordie Rieniets  
Dave Pile  
Jonny Owen

Production Assistant Digby Houghton

Legals Chris Kamen & Anthony Palmer, Hyper Legal

Production & Tax Accountants Anar Shah & Tony Nagle, Nagle Accounting  
Pty Ltd



## **Visual Post-production**

The Post Lounge

Longform Business Director - Dan Lake  
Executive Post Producers - Kurt Royan & Bronwyn Ketels  
Senior Producer - Claire Perry  
Post-Production Coordinator - Charlotte Carney  
Online Editor - Alan Bennett  
Edit Assistant - Kale Elbourne

Colourist - Edel Rafferty

Opening titles Design and visual effects animation by 21:19

Creative Director - Domenico Bartolo

Designers - Domenico Bartolo, Chris More & Ryan Guppy

Animation & compositing artists:

Andrew Gibbs  
James Manton  
Chris More  
Bobby Dazzler

## **Sound Post-Production**

Supervising Sound Editor - Emma Bortignon  
Dialogue Editor - Simon Rosenberg

Sound Effects Editor - Simon Rosenberg  
Sound Editors - Simon Walbrook, Liesl Pieterse

Foley Artist/Editor - Adrian Medhurst  
Foley Recordist - Olivia Aquilina

Oliver Cassidy VO & ADR Recordist - Mike Gissing, Digital City Studios

Hugo Weaving VO Recordist - Angus Robertson, Spectrum Films  
Post Producer - Basia A'Hern  
Facility Coordinator - Sofia Costa

Mix Facility - Windmill Audio  
Re-Recording Mixer - Simon Rosenberg

## **Music department**

Recording Producer - Lachlan Bramble  
Additional Recording - Adam Page

Musicians  
Ewen Bramble - cello  
Jonathon Coco - double bass  
Rowen Fox - recorder  
Linda Garrett - viola

Cameron Hill - violin  
Michael Ierace - piano  
Andrew Jezek - viola  
Justin Julian - viola  
Adam Page - flute, clarinet  
Konstantin Shamray - piano  
and  
Benaud Trio

Crowdfunding campaign coach - Josephine Maguire-Rosier  
Marketing collateral - Simon Murray, Fieldnotes  
Crowdfunding campaign publicist - Shauna Hurley  
Digital marketing consultant - Jeremy Beasley

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Filmed on location at the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park, Tasmania, Australia