

QUEENSLAND THEATRE CO.

# TORCH THE PLACE

By Benjamin Law  
Directed by Ngọc Phan

EDUCATORS RESOURCE

Torch The Place was first produced by Melbourne Theatre Company in 2020.



Queensland Theatre Company acknowledges the Jagera and Turrbal people who are the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work, and their unique relationship with the lands, seas and waterways. We pay our respects to their Elders both past and present, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Australian Government



Queensland  
Government

QUEENSLAND THEATRE IS ASSISTED BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT THROUGH CREATIVE AUSTRALIA, ITS ARTS FUNDING AND ADVISORY BODY. QUEENSLAND THEATRE IS SUPPORTED BY THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT THROUGH ARTS QUEENSLAND.

# CONTENTS

INFORMATION	3
ABOUT	4
PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES	6
CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM	8
CURRICULUM LINKS & KEY QUESTIONS	12
PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES	14
POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES	18
REFERENCES	27

*Torch the Place* was first produced by Melbourne Theatre Company in 2020.

These Education Resources were created by Queensland Theatre Company in collaboration with Moneth Montemayor and Fiona MacDonald.

A note from Moneth:

*Torch The Place* is a production that uses black comedy that invites the audience into a family intervention whose matriarch is debilitated by Hoarding disorder. Benjamin Law uses his signature humour through unapologetic and authentic characters to explore grief, 90s nostalgia and the social, political climate of Australia from migration in the 90s to now. You will laugh, gasp and cry.

**“Yes... I know. We should’ve thrown this out ages ago. We should’ve thrown out a lot of things by now. But in our family, we like to hold on to things. Mum calls this house her ‘museum’.”**

- Teresa

**Writers** Benjamin Law

**Original Production** Produced by Melbourne Theatre Company in 2020.

**Director** Ngọc Phan

---

## **VENUE**

Bille Brown Theatre, 78 Montague Rd, South Brisbane

## **DURATION**

1 hour 40 minutes, no interval, subject to change without notice

## **WARNINGS**

This production contains moderate coarse language, references to racism, sexual references, homosexual themes, drug use, and mental health themes including hoarding disorder and suicide. It also includes references to death and mortality, including cancer and infant loss, dynamic sound effects, theatrical smoke and haze, controlled live flame, flashing lights and moments of complete blackout.

## **RECOMMENDED AUDIENCE AGE**

Year 11 and Year 12, Tertiary (Ages 15+)



## ABOUT TORCH THE PLACE

**It's Mum's 60th. The kids have brought cake, presents... and a skip bin.**

From Queensland born-and-bred TV writer and author Benjamin Law (*The Family Law*), comes his breakout comedy *Torch The Place* - a hilarious and deeply moving exploration of family, legacy, and the things we hold onto — literally.

Teresa's mum can't let go of anything — from grudges to Princess Di's ash trays to late 90s Disney VHS. She sees her ordinary Gold Coast home as a museum of irreplaceable treasures. But she's not a curator... she's a hoarder.

When her children return to celebrate her 60th birthday, she's thrilled to have them home. But this isn't just a reunion — it's an intervention. Armed with a skip bin and good intentions, the siblings attempt to help their mother confront decades of detritus, rusted-on emotions and long-buried memories.

Inspired by Law's own family experience and Australia's fast-growing problem with compulsive hoarding, *Torch The Place* balances sharp wit with a deeply emotional reckoning around trauma, identity, and the meaning of “stuff.”

Directed by Queensland's own Ngọc Phan (*Vietgone, Boy Swallows Universe*) in her mainstage solo-directing debut and starring an ensemble you're going to fall head-over-heels for, *Torch The Place* is a “poignant modern comedy” (Arts Review) about a modern family that “will make you laugh, cry, and call your mum” (ArtsHub).



## REFLECTIONS FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

### ME, MARIE KONDO AND MESS

By Benjamin Law

**Benjamin Law is one of Australia's sharpest and funniest social commentators, acclaimed for his bestselling books (*The Family Law*, *Gaysia*) and TV creations (*The Family Law*, *Wellmania*). When he turned his gaze to the stage with *Torch the Place*, his first mainstage play, Benjamin brought the same wit, empathy and cultural insight to a story inspired by his own family's experiences with compulsive hoarding. In this personal essay, he traces the roots of that inspiration and how mess, memory and meaning can shape the stories we tell.**

As a kid on the Sunshine Coast, I was incapable of letting physical objects go. If I made a masterpiece out of playdough, my triumph was quickly replaced by panic. How could I keep this forever? When I got my school's Aussie of the Month award – a golden badge we got to wear for a month, then pass onto the next winner – I cried when I had to relinquish it. I anthropomorphised plush animals – my Keroppi doll from Hong Kong; my plush killer whale from Sea World – and slept with them until they took over my bed

(well into my teens). Maybe it was a childhood response to the fear of oblivion. Because if something can't be kept or preserved forever, what's the point of existence? Look, I was a pretty intense kid.

Eventually I grew out of it, but then I was growing up with it. Like so many migrant Australians, my parents struggled to let things go too. In my memoir, *The Family Law*, I wrote about living with compulsive hoarding before I knew how to name it. "We were sentimental to the point where it became pathological," I wrote. "We kept everything: every book we ever read, all the tennis trophies and tenpin bowling medals we won. Things accumulated like plaque, growing out ramshackle from the walls. As we grew, the house contracted. We found ourselves tiptoeing around piles of ancient magazines and shoeboxes of old school projects, and I became too embarrassed to have friends sleep over." In adulthood, I discovered this was small-fry compared to some of my friends' experiences. One friend's parents' hoarding got so bad, the parents began to smell. Another's parents hoarded living animals.

Even if you're not one of the estimated 1.2 million (not a typo) Australians living with compulsive hoarding, you've probably witnessed it. The local house with trolleys and rusted car shells in the yard. All the TV specials, from Oprah to Marie Kondo. (Admission: I really like Marie Kondo.) Shock reality TV horrors like *Hoarders*, *Buried Alive*, *Britain's Biggest Hoarders*, *The Hoarder Next Door*, *Hoarders: Family Secrets* ... you get the idea. There's ghoulish delight in seeing how bad things can get, replaced with a prim satisfaction at seeing epic messes so promptly cleaned up. But for many hoarders, swift clean-outs are dangerous. Some report emotional distress at similar levels to those who've experienced sexual assault. Suicides happen in the aftermath. Yet at the same time, it's also paramount these people live with hygiene, safety and dignity. It's a diabolical Catch-22.

In order to help, we must understand. In their 2010 book *Stuff: Compulsive Hoarding and the Meaning of Things*, Dr. Gail Steketee and Dr. Randy O. Frost wrote that, until recently, we didn't know what led to compulsive hoarding, let alone avenues for treatment. This has led to false assumptions taking hold, like the idea hoarders must come from lives of deprivation: a response to a mindset of frugality in a world of abundance. (Not true. There are plenty of rich hoarders.) We assume hoarders are untidy and slovenly. But hoarders have almost medical-level concerns about hygiene and tidiness, though obviously to their own unique criteria. What is true is that the root cause of compulsive hoarding is usually trauma. People who hoard don't have broken minds.

They have broken hearts. There's also another way of looking at compulsive hoarding: that the mind of a compulsive hoarder has its own magnificence. Those who hoard imbue objects with meaning others simply miss. In objects that'd be considered useless to anyone else – mundane items others would regard as trash – hoarders can see a million different uses, myriad reasons why they're special, and have countless stories behind their origin. "Hoarders do appear to think in more complex ways," Steketee and Frost write. "In particular, their minds seem flooded with details about possessions that the rest of us overlook." Which is why I can't judge.

Full admission: I'm still a hoarder too. All writers are. Not of physical objects anymore, but of collected stories, anecdotes and details. Writers obsessively file and archive and stow away notes – just in case – which is classic hoarding behaviour, when you think about it. All of us working in a similar pursuit, of finding some meaning in this grand mess that is life.

---



### About Benjamin Law

This Queensland born and bred playwright, screenwriter and journalist, has grown into quite the accomplished creative. Did we mention he was one of Harper Bazaar's Visionary Men? What's not to love and learn. Benjamin's career has taken him from page, to stage, to screen.

He is the co-executive producer, co-creator and co-writer of the Netflix comedy-drama *Wellmania* (2023), creator and co-writer of three seasons of the award-winning SBS/Hulu/Comedy Central Asia TV series *The Family Law* (2016–2019), and playwright of Queensland Theatre Company's 2026 production of *Torch the Place*.

# CAST AND CREATIVES

## CAST



**DENISE CHAN**  
TERESA



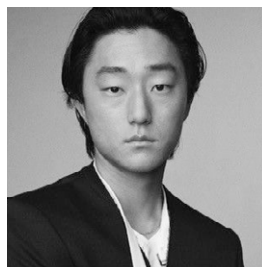
**HSIAO-LING TANG**  
MUM



**KRISTIE NGUY**  
NATALIE



**LOGAN SO**  
TOBY



**PETER THURNWALD**  
PAUL

## CREATIVES & STAGE MANAGEMENT



**BENJAMIN LAW**  
WRITER



**NGOC PHAN**  
DIRECTOR



**EMILY BURTON**  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR



**JEREMY ALLEN**  
SET AND COSTUME DESIGNER



**BRIANA CLARK**  
LIGHTING DESIGNER



**WIL HUGHES**  
COMPOSER AND SOUND  
DESIGNER



**JACINTA WAY**  
STAGE MANAGER



**TIA-HANEE CLEARY**  
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

# A Q&A WITH THE DIRECTOR



**NGOC PHAN**  
DIRECTOR

## NGOC FOR YOUR FIRST MAINSTAGE SOLO-DIRECTING DEBUT CAN YOU TELL US WHY *TORCH THE PLACE* IS MEANINGFUL TO YOU? WHY THIS PLAY?

Hoarding is too often played for shock value. Take “*Hoarders*” for example: it’s the punchline, the reality TV freakshow. What Benjamin Law has written rebuffs that idea. This play humanises what we judge as unhealthy, and it asks hard questions about the systems that wear people down. The housing market, Centrelink, economic pressure. And on a deeply vulnerable level, the traumas we live with that quietly erode a person’s sense of worth, until the only thing they can control is what they keep. And it does all of that - while still being funny. Very funny. The comedy in this show is gold. There’s the joke inside the tragedy and the tragedy inside the joke – sometimes in the same breath. You laugh because the alternative is, well... unbearable.

## WHY IS *TORCH THE PLACE* RELEVANT NOW?

We may seem more connected than ever and potentially lonelier than we have ever been. We live in a consumerist society that is very good at selling us things, and very bad at teaching us how to sit with each other in the mess of being a human. This play is about connection and care, in their most unglamorous and exhausting ways, especially in a family setting. It’s about what it actually looks like to love someone who is difficult to love, whilst looking at our own stuff (pun intended). And it centres a migrant family whose story reflects the lived reality of so many, whose experiences are still rarely seen on our stages. Now feels exactly right.

## THIS PLAY HAS SO MANY LAYERS AND UTILISES MAGICAL REALISM FOR FLASHBACKS AND ALSO CONVEYS SOME INCREDIBLY CONFRONTING ISSUES. CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR APPROACH TO MAGICAL REALISM?

If there’s one place to do magical realism and do it well, it’s the theatre. Ben has written some of the most wild and imaginative sequences I’ve ever read, whether it’s a game show, a flashback or a medical hallucination, and it has allowed our creative team to dream big and be bold. Boxes come alive, the house vomits, rats become life-sized. But – the anchor is always the performers and the characters they are playing. No matter how stylised the staging becomes, the emotional truth for the characters has to stay completely grounded and rooted in the story we are telling. The theatricality is in service of honesty, never instead of it. We may tip into the surreal, but the audience should feel it in their bodies before they process it intellectually.



# A Q&A WITH THE SET AND COSTUME DESIGNER



**JEREMY ALLEN**  
SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

**The set itself becomes somewhat of a sixth character. Can you unpack your process for designing a set that includes specific detailed props from Ben’s script and layering in the history of the family as well as balancing multiple magical realist moments?**

I can confidently say I’ve never read a script with such huge needs when it comes to props, and then also have such incredibly specific prop detail! Not only is it a ‘hoarder’ house, but it also has to contain several very specific objects, elements and ‘tricks’, all that need to be revealed in a particular order. We then have to create space for these surreal sequences or exterior moments outside of the house - it’s a massive challenge.

At its core, it’s a space that feels cluttered, disorganised and chaotic which can then be stripped back and made tidy. We began by looking at ways we could create order amongst the chaos, and then

find ways to remove it. Once we landed on the idea of these movable junk towers, it became a choreography game for Ngoc and the cast - working out ways to get things moved where we need them, how to open up space and create stage images for the moments of magic realism, and then leave the space. There’s also an Everest of paperwork which has been completed by our amazing Stage Management team to track almost every single prop, even down to the incidental ones - every bit of paper, every scrap.

Stylistically, it’s an injection of pure nostalgia - the idea that this house is more than just full of junk, but full of memory - every item should look like it has its own story, a *raison d’être*. There’s a heightened feel to everything too - the colours are brighter, the patterns clash - all these elements help with making the space feel busy and chaotic, but also cohesive. There’s an overall design language that I hope gives the show its own kind of visual identity and feel.



# CURRICULUM LINKS

## DRAMA (GENERAL) AND DRAMA IN PRACTICE (APPLIED) - YEAR 11 AND 12

### THEMES

- Mental Health
- Family
- Racism/Migration
- Grief
- Australian Identity
- Sexuality
- Consumerism/Capitalism

### FORM

- Climatic structure
- Ensemble performance
- Hybrid structure
- Linear narrative-structure with stylised flashbacks

### STYLE

- Contemporary political theatre
- Epic Theatre
- Magical Realism
- Realism
- Visual Theatre
- Theatre of Social Comment Styles

### GENRE

- Black Comedy

### DRAMATIC CONVENTIONS USED

Breaking out of realist action, creating or breaking the fourth wall, dreamscape, dream sequence, extreme variation from serious to comic, flashback, motif, poetic image, surreal transformation, symbolic image/object/sound/movement/motif, use of song/sound and word play.

## DRAMA (GENERAL) SENIOR SYLLABUS V1.3

### UNIT 1: SHARE

*Torch The Place* is centered on a modern Chinese-Australian Family which explores socio, cultural and economic experience of those from the Asia-Pacific region exploring the diversity of Australian experiences and identity through careful execution of hybridity of styles.

#### QCAA Inquiry questions:

How can we use drama to celebrate, document and empower and share understanding of human experience?

How can we recreate people's stories in linear and non-linear dramatic forms?

How can people's stories be shared through making and responding to drama as ensemble and audience?

### UNIT 2: REFLECT

*Torch The Place* uses Realism and Magical Realism to explore intergenerational family conflict with the purpose of informing and challenging audiences, understanding and empathizing with the truth of others' experiences, and chronicling/documenting and celebrating what it is to be human

#### QCAA Inquiry questions:

How can we use representational dramatic traditions to inform, empathise and chronicle/document lived experiences?

How can we manage dramatic languages to reflect the human condition?

How can we reflect contemporary and inherited styles of Realism through making and responding?

### UNIT 3: CHALLENGE

*Torch The Place* uses black comedy to explore how drama can be used to challenge our understanding of humanity over time. The production manipulates form and style to express philosophical and political viewpoints in action in society. Traces of Epic theatre is subtly peppered into the production.

#### QCAA Inquiry questions:

How can drama help to educate, challenge and empower us to question society at this time and advocate change?

How can we shape dramatic languages to communicate and challenge an understanding of humanity at this time?

How can we make and respond to dramatic works to explore challenges and demands of the human experience?

### DRAMA IN PRACTICE (APPLIED) SENIOR SYLLABUS

#### UNIT C: CONTEMPORARY

*Torch The Place* can be utilised as an example of contemporary theatre-making in an Asia-Pacific context. The production uses characteristics drawn from a diverse range of forms and styles.

#### Key Question

How does Queensland Theatre Company's production of *Torch The Place* use elements of drama, form and style to celebrate and challenge perspectives of Australian identity?

#### UNIT D: COMMENTARY

This production can be utilised to demonstrate the power of drama in commenting on social issues specifically sociological, historical, personal and cultural.

#### Key Question

How does Queensland Theatre Company's production of *Torch The Place* use elements of drama, form and style for social commentary?

### ADDITIONAL LEARNING AND INTEREST AREAS CONNECTED TO THE THEMES AND IDEAS IN THE PRODUCTION:

#### ENGLISH (GENERAL) SENIOR SYLLABUS

Unit 1: Perspectives and texts

Unit 2: Texts and culture

#### LITERATURE (GENERAL) SENIOR SYLLABUS

Unit 1: Introduction to literary studies

Unit 3: Literature and identity

# PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1: CONTEXT

*Torch the Place* is set mid to late 2010s with flashbacks and references to 90s Australia. To assist with some historical, social and cultural references we encourage students to explore various Australian contexts, and consider how it might have been different for a Chinese-Australian family in Australia in these eras.

Some key and contextual references you may like to explore include: Music, migration, racism, Princess Diana, housing, family dynamics (eg. 90s Family TV viewing vs now).

### EXERCISE A:

Compare and contrast 90s Australia to 2010s Australia.

#### Suggested viewing

[ABC iView: Back in Time for Dinner Education Shorts - 1990s](#)

VIEW

EXERCISE A: Complete the table below:

PROMPTS	90'S AUSTRALIA	2010'S AUSTRALIA
Australian Political context		
Australian social and cultural issues including migration		
Major global events		
Technology - devices used to watch screen content		
Technology - devices used to listen to music How is media/ news/ tabloids consumed?		
Pop Culture - TV Game Shows		
Pop Culture - Music		
Pop Culture - Fashion		
Australian "identity"		

## ACTIVITY 1 (CONT.): CONTEXT

### EXERCISE B:

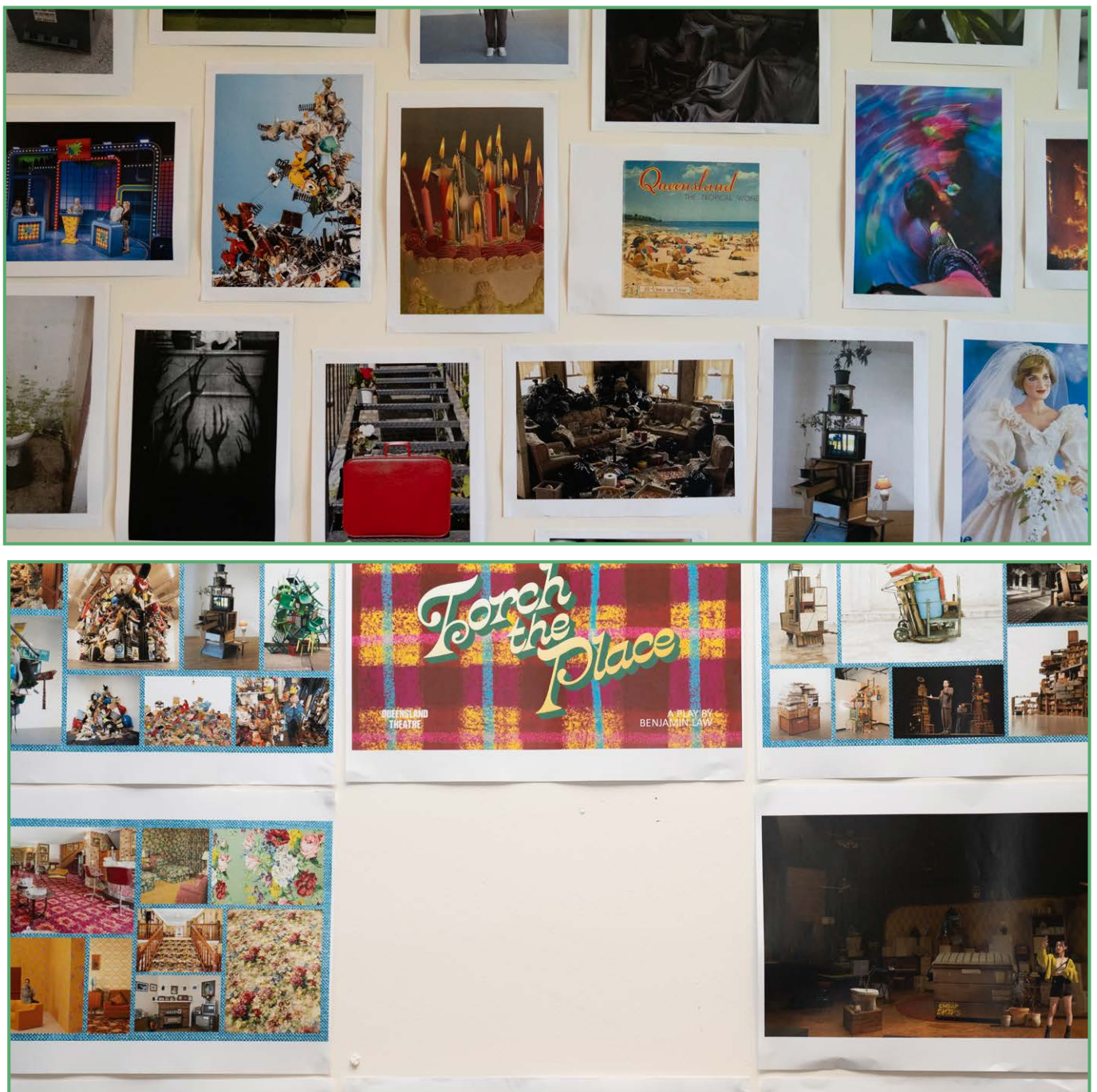
Using the information you have collected, create a moodboard that visually represents each decade in Australia. This can be completed as a group activity where students collaborate. You may also allocate half of the groups to create a representation of the 90s and the other half to represent 2010s.

### EXERCISE C:

#### Gallery walk

Students display their Moodboard on their device like it is an exhibition at a gallery or museum. Students then exhibit the Moodboards to see the different representations of each decade.

#### EXERCISE C EXAMPLE:



Images show *Torch the Place* Designer Jeremy Allen's initial design references from the rehearsal room

## ACTIVITY 2: UNDERSTANDING HOARDING DISORDER

This production explores the challenges of confronting Hoarding Disorder while simultaneously uncovering each child's individual relationship with their mother as they conduct an intervention.

### Setting up a class discussion

Please consider a trauma informed care approach, and please ensure all students feel they can engage or disengage as needed. A possible opening script for you could sound like:

“Today we're exploring a topic from *Torch The Place*. We're looking at Hoarding Disorder, which is a recognised mental health condition. Some people may have personal experiences connected to this topic. If you find the conversations overwhelming, you are welcome to step outside, take a break, or choose not to share personal stories. We are here to understand, not judge.”

Establish a class agreement about this content. For example:

- We speak respectfully
- We avoid making fun of people or situations
- We talk about behaviors, not labelling people
- We keep personal stories private unless we have permission to share them

### EXERCISE A :

#### Class discussion:

- What do you know about Hoarding Disorder?
- Where and how has it been represented?
- Did you know it was a Disorder or Mental Health Condition?

### EXERCISE B :

*Think, Pair, Share*

Instruct students to complete the inquiry questions individually, followed by sharing their findings with a partner and then contributing to a class discussion.

#### READ

[Benjamin Law's Playwright Notes](#)

[VIEW PAGE 6](#)

#### READ

[Unpacking hoarding disorder by Dr James Collett  
MAPS](#)

[VIEW](#)

#### Key questions for discussion:

What is Hoarding Disorder?

What are the four major factors that influence hoarding development?

What is the difference between Collection and Hoarding?

What predictions can you make about how Mum will respond to her children attempting to clean her house?

## ACTIVITY 2 (CONT): UNDERSTANDING HOARDING DISORDER

### OPTIONAL SUPPORT

If you find that your students are impacted by this exploration, you may wish to have a further conversation with them about how they might engage with Queensland Theatre Company's Production of *Torch the Place* and what they can do to support themselves or their family before or after viewing the production. Some options of free support services are below that you could recommend:

#### Lifeline (13 11 14):

Lifeline has trained crisis supporters available 24/7. They also offer an online Crisis Support Chat seven days a week between 7pm-4am AEDT ([www.lifeline.org.au/crisischat](http://www.lifeline.org.au/crisischat))

#### Headspace:

Headspace is Australia's National Mental Health Foundation, providing early intervention mental health services to 12-25 year olds. To find a centre near you, or sign up for online and phone support, head to [Headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation](http://www.headspace.org.au).

[How to Recognise Your Window of Tolerance — Mind My Peelings](#)

[Mental health resources and tools - Black Dog Institute | Better Mental Health](#)

[And the most comprehensive support look up service in Australia is - Ask Izzy](#)



# POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1

### EXERCISE A - RECALL:

Initial recall and debrief of Queensland Theatre Company's *Torch the Place*.

- Identify themes explored in *Torch the Place*
- Identify the social, political, cultural and historical issues explored in *Torch the Place*
- Describe how the dramatic styles were used in *Torch the Place* (select 1 or 2 of the styles listed below)
  - Contemporary Political Theatre
  - Epic Theatre
  - Magical Realism
  - Realism
  - Visual Theatre
  - Theatre of Social Comment Styles
- What is the dramatic meaning of *Torch the Place*? What is the key message?
- Why is this play relevant to a contemporary audience?
- Does *Torch the Place* effectively communicate the dramatic meaning to the audience?

### EXERCISE B - INTERPRETING AND ANALYSING THEMATIC CONCEPTS:

1. Explore and compile a list of themes from *Torch The Place* either on a whiteboard, butcher's paper, using collaborative digital tools such as a shared OneNote, Word document or Padlet.

#### Themes in *Torch The Place*

- Mental Health (Hoarding Disorder)
- Family relationships
- Racism / Migration
- Grief / Loss
- Australian Identity
- Sexuality and identity
- Consumerism and Capitalism

You may elect to ask students to identify additional themes, or you may choose to focus on specific themes that you feel confident and comfortable with.



## ACTIVITY 1 (CONT.)

2. Using prompts such as form, style, conventions, elements of drama and production design elements, as students recall examples of how those themes were conveyed in the live performance.

They will need to describe the example on post it notes (to stick onto the whiteboard or butcher's paper) or type them into the collaborative digital document. e.g.,

**Language**  
"Mate"  
Paul often uses Australian colloquialisms.

**AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY**

**Feature prop.**  
Humphrey B Bear plush toy.  
This toy is a reference to the Australian 90s kid's show. It brings a nostalgic throwback. Mum has an incredibly strong attachment and perhaps it's a reminder of when her children were young.

# ACTIVITY 1 (CONT.)

## EXERCISE C - INTERPRETING AND ANALYSING:

Interpret and analyse how production design (set, props, and costume) is manipulated to communicate meaning to the audience.

### Set

DESCRIBE THREE DIFFERENT SETTINGS, SCENES OR WAYS THE SET WAS USED	HOW WAS IT USED? USE DRAMATIC LANGUAGES - STYLE, FORM, CONVENTIONS, ELEMENTS OF DRAMA.	INTERPRET AND ANALYSE HOW THIS SET WAS USED TO COMMUNICATE THE DRAMATIC MEANING, THEMES, AND CONCEPTS.
Version 1:		
Version 2:		
Version 3:		



# ACTIVITY 1 (CONT.)

**Feature props:** Choose three feature props to analyse.

FEATURE PROP (PROVIDE DETAILED DESCRIPTION)	HOW WAS IT USED? USE DRAMATIC LANGUAGES - STYLE, FORM, CONVENTIONS, ELEMENTS OF DRAMA.	INTERPRET AND ANALYSE HOW THIS SET WAS USED TO COMMUNICATE THE DRAMATIC MEANING, THEMES, CONCEPTS.



# ACTIVITY 1 (CONT.)

## COSTUME

DESCRIBE COSTUME	HOW WAS IT USED? USE DRAMATIC LANGUAGES - STYLE, FORM, CONVENTIONS, ELEMENTS OF DRAMA.	INTERPRET AND ANALYSE HOW THIS SET WAS USED TO COMMUNICATE THE DRAMATIC MEANING, THEMES, AND CONCEPTS.



## ACTIVITY 2

### DESIGN CHALLENGE

Sets, key props and costumes provide essential clues for context and are a vehicle to both explicitly and implicitly communicate dramatic meaning (social comment). They can serve as motifs, linking devices and move the dramatic action forward.

Using the Script Excerpt as stimuli, challenge students to create their own version of the exterior set and representation of Toby and Natalie when they first appear on stage.

### Script Excerpt from Benjamin Law's *Torch The Place*

#### SETTING

A former family display home and yard in suburban coastal Queensland (the aggressively suburban, non-flashy, non-seaside part) that's fallen into disrepair. The action takes place in a week of Queensland summer sometime in the mid-2010s.

#### OUTSIDE IN THE FRONT YARD

Random things decay on the lawn. House plants growing from broken teapots. A broken bird bath. An old fridge. And in the middle of everything, by the gate: a broken toilet with a small frangipani tree growing out of it. It's just branches. No flowers. It's possibly dead. TOBY (mid-20s, surly) and his sister NATALIE (early 30s, perky) approach the yard. Natalie is model material, all Instagram-friendly colours and patterns, in big designer sunglasses and decorated in branded bags. Toby is dressed like the undergraduate he is - monochromatic clothes to match his mood - and wears a worn shirt with a political slogan like 'Stay Woke'; 'The Patriarchy is a Pyramid Scheme' or similar. Irritable, he can't stop scratching his neck, and wheels Natalie's large designer - possibly Louis Vuitton - suitcase, which has a 'HEAVY' sticker tagged on it. She has her phone to her face, live-streaming onto Instagram Live, more invested in her screen than reality.

## ACTIVITY 2 (CONT.)

### EXERCISE A - INITIAL SCRIPT BREAKDOWN AND BRAINSTORMING:

#### Set prompts:

- Read the script excerpt and list key props and source references images
- Find reference photos of the exterior of Gold Coast/QLD suburban homes from the 90s.
- Consider textures, exterior, landscaping
- Create your own moodboard for your interpretation of the exterior set
- Consider how the set design and key props can signify social commentary on themes, issues and dramatic meaning.

### EXERCISE B:

#### Costumes:

- Read the script excerpt and list key props and source references images
- Find reference photos of the exterior of Gold Coast/QLD suburban homes from the 90s.
- Consider textures, exterior, landscaping
- Create your own moodboard for your interpretation of the exterior set
- Consider how the set design and key props can signify social commentary on themes, issues and dramatic meaning.



Designer Jeremy Allen's mood board for the exterior of Gold Coast/QLD suburban homes.

## ACTIVITY 2 (CONT.)

### EXERCISE B:

#### Costumes:

- Read the script excerpt and list key props and source references images
- Find reference photos of the exterior of Gold Coast/QLD suburban homes from the 90s.
- Consider textures, exterior, landscaping
- Create your own moodboard for your interpretation of the exterior set
- Consider how the set design and key props can signify social commentary on themes, issues and dramatic meaning.

	TOBY	NATALIE
COSTUME		
PROPS		

### EXERCISE C - TIME TO DESIGN:

Create a presentation that includes the set design, Toby's costume and Natalie's costume and props. Include annotations with your design justifying your creative choices. Be sure to link it back to the dramatic meaning.

# ACTIVITY 3 - HOT SEAT

## PURPOSE:

for students to gain a deeper understanding of the characters, themes and project into the future. Students will utilise improvisation skills.

## INSTRUCTIONS:

- Students select a character from *Torch the Place* to be when they are on the hot seat
    - Mum
    - Teresa
    - Toby
    - Natalie
    - Paul
  - Traditionally, hot seating occurs with only one person in the hot seat however in this instance and to enable ensemble improvisation you are welcome to add “additional hot seats” to enable pairs and triads.
  - For this activity, have the students project their characters 10 years from when the play is set. The live performance is set in mid-2010s with flashbacks to the 90s. This hot-seat is set in the mid-2020s. Give students some time to brainstorm, provide prompts on character considerations such as age, language choice, etc.
  - Set up a stage and audience area. Place 1 to 3 chairs on the stage area.
- In the process of the cleanup since the intervention, was there any new discoveries and things that you found that you have kept? And why?
  - The person in the Hot Seat is required to answer in character. If in pairs or triads they can also improvise conversational responses with one another.
  - You may also evolve your line of questioning with follow up questions.
  - Consider textures, exterior, landscaping
  - Create your own moodboard for your interpretation of the exterior set
  - Consider how the set design and key props can signify social commentary on themes, issues and dramatic meaning.

### Ask questions:

Model how to ask thoughtful, in-role/in-context questions for those in the hot seat and eventually let the audience ask questions too.

### Sample questions:

Wow, the house is looking very different from when we saw you 10 years ago. Reflecting on the intervention, what do you think you would have done differently?

How is your relationship now with your family?

How have you evolved from the process of confronting some difficult family truths?

### Reference List:

Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority, (2026) Senior Drama Syllabus v1.3, QCAA, [https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/senior-qce/syllabuses/snr\\_drama\\_25\\_syll.pdf](https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/senior-qce/syllabuses/snr_drama_25_syll.pdf)

Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority, (2019) Drama in Practice 2019 v1.0, QCAA, [https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/senior-qce/artssnr\\_drama\\_prac\\_19\\_app\\_smlp\\_ass\\_inst\\_project.pdf](https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/senior-qce/artssnr_drama_prac_19_app_smlp_ass_inst_project.pdf)

ABC iview 2026, Back In Time For Dinner: Education Shorts, ABC, viewed February 2026, <https://iview.abc.net.au/show/back-in-time-for-dinner-education-shorts>

ABC News (Australia) 2012, Scrap multiculturalism, Pauline Hanson declares, YouTube video, viewed February 2026, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64it4eAQjnk>

Hanson, P, One Nation Maiden Speech (1996), viewed February 2026 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64it4eAQjnk>

Choi, M 2001, Inaugural Speech: Member for Capalaba, Parliament of Queensland, Brisbane, viewed 20 February 2026, <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/members/InauguralSpeech/Choi.pdf>

Collett, J 2019, Unpacking hoarding disorder, InPsych, vol. 41, no. 5, Australian Psychological Society, viewed 20 February 2026, <https://psychology.org.au/for-members/publications/inpsych/2019/october/unpacking-hoarding-disorder>.

### Photography Credits:

Hero Photography: Sam Scoufos, Compadre Pictures

Rehearsal Photography: Georgia Haupt

## QUEENSLAND THEATRE CO.

 qldtheatreco

 @qldtheatreco

 @qldtheatreco

 @qldtheatreco

 @qldtheatreco  [queenslandtheatre.com.au](http://queenslandtheatre.com.au)