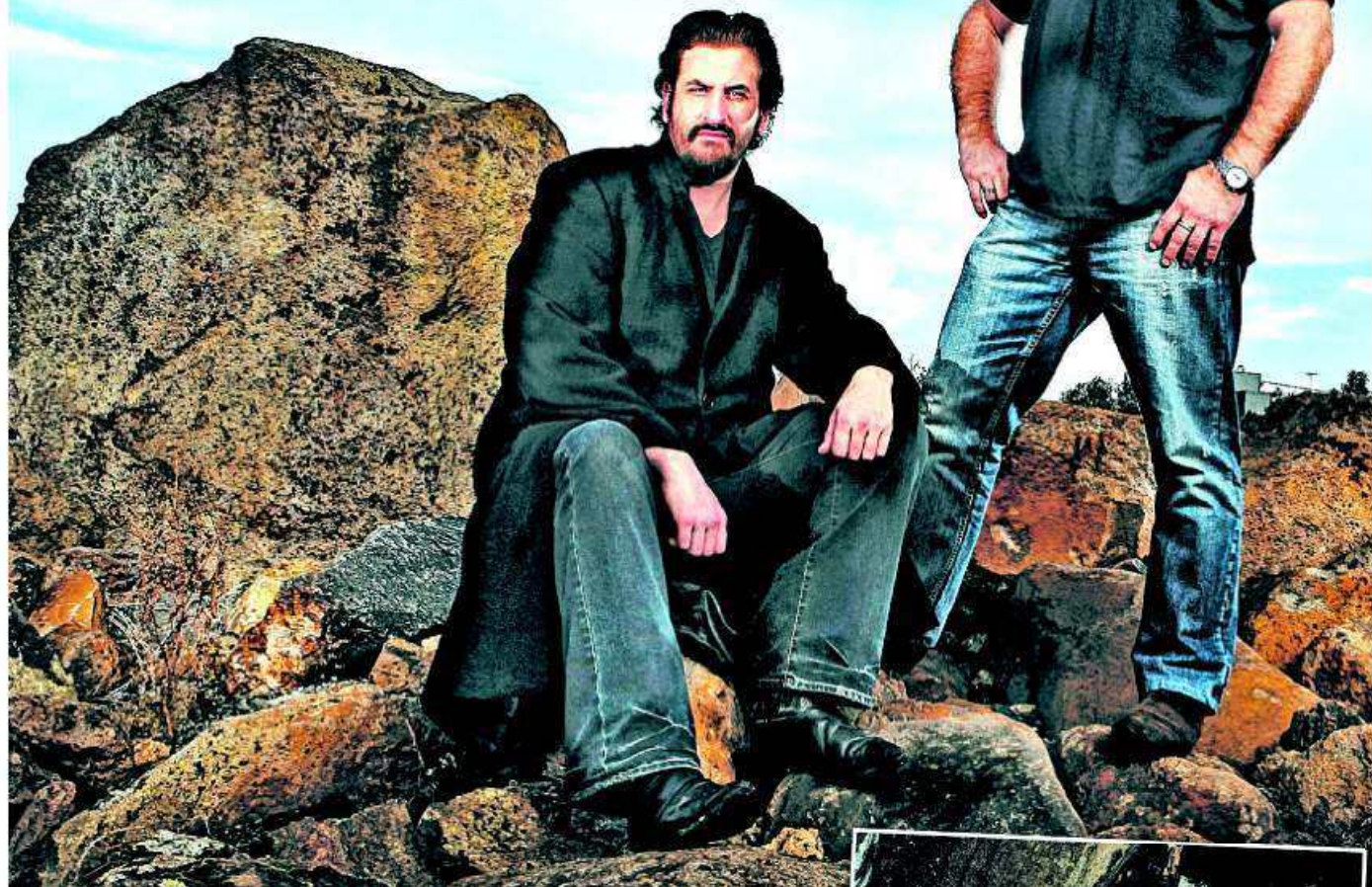


Stars to be buried alive



Drama: Lachy Hulme and Shane Jacobson (top) will play Todd Russell and Brant Webb (above). Main picture: ALEX COPPEL

KENNY star Shane Jacobson is going underground after signing to play Brant Webb in the much-anticipated mini-series *Beaconsfield*.

Lachy Hulme, who featured in the *Matrix* trilogy, will co-star as Todd Russell in the Channel 9 production.

It will tell the dramatic rescue of the Tasmanian miners trapped 1km underground for 14 days.

"To be asked to tell a story that is part of Australian history, a headline event, is very special," said Jacobson, who parlayed his role as "dunnyman" Kenny into *Top Gear* presenter.

"I got to know Brant when we were doing the Celebrity Grand Prix, so I've spent some time with him and have met Rachel (Brant's wife).

"I have had another chat to Brant about doing this and the story is mind-blowing.

"He was convinced he was going to die every minute he was down that hole."

Asked how he felt about spending so much time in a confined space with co-star Hulme, Jacobson laughed.

"I have this theory. I am going to kiss him early on and just get it out of the way," he said. "Because I've lost all this weight on Jenny Craig, I've made myself look my best for Lachy."

Hulme also made a name for himself in *Hollowmen* and *Offspring*.

When the Beaconsfield gold mine collapsed on Anzac Day 2006, Australia prayed and the world waited in hope that the miners would make it out alive.

Beaconsfield will recount the riveting story of the mental and physical fortitude of two men trapped in

a cramped, pitch-black metal basket no bigger than a dog kennel.

The show will pay homage to miner Larry Knight, who died in the rockfall.

Beaconsfield will tell the story from the perspective of rescuers Matthew Gill and Pat Ball who, with their expert teams, were required to devise a failsafe plan for a rescue unlike anything previously attempted.

The show will also examine the strain faced by the miners' wives and children.

Russell has thrown his support behind the project, which is being produced for Nine by Southern Star.

"I hope the mini-series

puts the truth out there to the general public, because there are a lot of things that weren't reported properly," he said.

"People think we were able to sit up in the cage, with plenty of room, but we didn't have that at all.

"The room we had was minimal, quite uncomfortable. People will see that, plus the dangers.

"It is also critical that Larry is played as the gentleman he was." Knight's brother Shane said his family had no desire to be involved.

"I mean no ill will on anyone, but I won't be watching," he said.

"Larry's loss was hard enough in itself to deal with."

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Kenny signs on for Beaconsfield

DARREN DEVLYN

THE star of *Kenny*, Shane Jacobson, is going underground after signing to play Brant Webb in the mini-series *Beaconsfield*.

Lachy Hulme, of *Matrix Trilogy*, *The Hollowmen* and *Offspring* fame, will co-star as Todd Russell in the TV mini-series, which will go into production next month.

The three-hour *Beaconsfield* will tell the dramatic story of the rescue of the Tasmanian miners from the collapsed Beaconsfield gold mine.

The mine caved in on Anzac Day 2006, trapping Mr Russell, Mr Webb and fellow miner Larry Knight a kilometre underground.

Beaconsfield recounts a story of mental and physical fortitude and two very different men, trapped together for 14 days under rubble in a metal cage no bigger than a dog kennel.

The mini-series will also pay due respect to the tragic loss of Mr Knight.

"To be asked to tell a story that is part of Australian history, a headline event, is very special," said Jacobson, a presenter on *Top Gear Australia*.

"I got to know Brant when we were doing the Celebrity Grand Prix so I've spent some time with him.

"I have had another chat to Brant about doing this and the story is mind-blowing.

"He was convinced he was going to



MINERS: Brant Webb and Todd Russell

die every minute he was down that hole."

Beaconsfield will tell the story from the perspective of rescuers Matthew Gill and Pat Ball who, with their expert teams, were required to devise a failsafe plan for a rescue unlike anything attempted before.

Mr Russell has thrown his support behind the project, which is being produced for the Nine Network by Southern Star and will involve shooting in Melbourne and Tasmania.

"I hope the mini-series puts the truth out there to the general public because there are a lot of things that weren't reported properly," Mr Russell said yesterday.

"People think we were able to sit up in the cage, with plenty of room, but we didn't have that at all.

"It is also critical that Larry is played as the gentleman he was."

Mr Knight's brother Shane said his family had no desire to be involved.

Miners help bring their miracle rescue to life

Fiona Byrne

THE dramatic rescue of trapped miners Todd Russell and Brant Webb was re-enacted in Beaconsfield last night.

With Russell and Webb and their families looking on, Channel 9 re-created the moment in 2006 when the pair emerged from the mine after 14 days trapped 1km underground.

Shane Jacobson and Lachy Hulme morphed

into Webb and Russell respectively.

“It is going to be hard seeing it re-enacted,” Russell said as the scene was being prepared.

“You see the footage so much you try to put it behind you. Sometimes it is all a bit of a blur. When I went down to see the home (family) scenes being shot, the emotions really got to me, so tonight will be a bit

emotional for me.”

The pair are consultants on the telemovie.

“It is our story and we want people to see it from our perspective,” Russell said.

The telemovie, which also stars Cameron Daddo, Tessa James, Sacha Horler and Steve Vizard, is expected to air next year.



Re-enactment: Lachy Hulme, above left, will play Beaconsfield mine disaster survivor Todd Russell, right, in the Nine telemovie while (above right) colleague Brant Webb, left, will be played by Shane Jacobson. Pictures: ROSS MARSDEN

Mine disaster movie crew in town

By MATT MALONEY

BEACONSFIELD was once again thrust into the national spotlight as cameramen were drawn to the town by word of disaster at its goldmine.

This time, it was orchestrated.

A Southern Star film crew yesterday started the last days of the five-week shoot on location in Beaconsfield where in 2006 miners Brant Webb and Todd Russell spent 14 days trapped almost one kilometre underground.

The production team will be in town until Friday

where they will film at Todd's parents' Kaye and Noel "Nobby" Russell's house, on Mr Russell's bush block, and at the mine.

A cast of Australian drama notables — including Lachy Hulme, who plays Todd Russell, Shane Jacobson, as Mr Webb, and Michala Banas, as Carolyn Russell — were in town not only to work but meet the locals they portrayed.

Hulme and Banas are staying at Todd Russell's home until Friday, both having met the family on several occasions before the

shoot.

Hulme said meeting the people involved in the disaster meant that the film would give the story greater depth that news coverage at the time did not.

"And I've learnt that if you put a bunch of the most evil minds in the room and ask them to devise the most diabolical death trap ever invented, they would be hard put to come up with anything worse than the cage Todd and Brant were trapped in," he said.

Mr Russell said it had

been a sensitive time seeing his story played out in front on him again.

"Seeing the other side of it — the family side — has been a bit emotional and a bit raw," he said.

But seeing Hulme, who put on 20 kilograms over one month for the role, made up to look like himself was a bit surreal, Mr Russell said.

"They're really trying to get him to look as good as me," he quipped.

The telemovie is expected to screen on Channel Nine early next year.



Actor Lachy Hulme, playing Beaconsfield mine disaster survivor Todd Russell, is prepared for filming of the upcoming telemovie about the disaster.

Picture: GEOFF ROBSON



THREE TIMES LUCKY

Picture: ROSS MARSDEN

Beaconsfield survivor Brant Webb met his movie double Shane Jacobson yesterday and revealed a secret – he had been trapped in underground mines twice before the Tasmanian disaster.

Former *Kenny* star Jacobson was in Tasmania yesterday to start filming the TV movie of the 2006 cave-in.

Brant, left, who has the reputation of getting the most out of life, said: "I must have been born to cheat death."

Rockfall survivor relives perils as filming begins

On-location filming has started for a movie about the Beaconsfield mine disaster. **BRUCE MOUNSTER** goes behind the scenes.

BEACONSFIELD Gold Mine disaster survivor Brant Webb yesterday revealed he had been trapped by two underground rockfalls before the Anzac Day 2006 drama.

Mr Webb said those incidents included a scary situation in which a section of tunnel caved in while he was operating an underground digger.

Speaking yesterday ahead of local filming for Channel Nine's Beaconsfield disaster telemovie, Mr Webb said he had been up to his neck in debris while sitting in the machine's cab.

"I had one foot on the brake and the other hard on the accelerator. It was going nowhere," he said.

Mr Webb said he had been stuck for an hour and the experience prompted him, ahead of Anzac Day 2006, to opt for a pay cut and a mostly above-ground role at the mine.

That made his Anzac Day presence alongside co-survivor Todd Russell and their fellow miner Larry Knight extra unlucky.

"I must have been born to cheat death," Mr Webb said.

He also revealed that, back when he was "young and stupid", he had been trapped in the fo'c'sle of a

prawn trawler that had been capsizing after becoming stuck on rocks off Western Australia's

Kimberley coast.

A Southern Star film crew arrived in Tasmania yesterday afternoon to begin three days of filming around Beaconsfield and down the mine.

The tele-movie makers didn't mess around.

The first local shot was taken just after 4pm, along a rough vehicle track on Todd Russell's property.

In the distance a Toyota HiLux ute was parked with its bullbar nuzzled into the low bushes.

Out of the four-wheel-drive climbed Todd and his father Nobby – but wait, that can't be right. The real Todd and Nobby Russell were casual spectators standing behind the camera.

The bloke in front with the giant collar and the brown moustache that turned south to become a beard was, in fact, Lachy Hulme of *Matrix Revolutions* fame.

Beside him was seasoned Launceston actor Bill Carney, who still sported a grey beard grown for his recent performance as Jacob in a Launceston performance of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor*

Dreamcoat.

The moviemen wandered down the track brandishing rifles. Hulme took aim at something, decided not to pull the trigger, and they wandered a few paces further before he took aim again – and, bang.

The take will be an opening scene for the drama which will grace Australian TV screens in a few months.

An airline delay yesterday hampered the Melbourne actors and film crew who arrived in Launceston only about two hours before filming began.

Make-up and wardrobe artists and a publicist arrived yesterday morning to transform the Beaconsfield Community Centre into a make-shift trailer.

Miner and townie-type clothing hung from racks in one corner of the the wooden-floored brick building.

About 3pm the make-up artist was finishing off Hulme's hair when the real Nobby Russell wandered over and said "hello son" and gave the actor a fatherly hug.

Hulme said he had been delighted to have an ear pierced in three places and to put on 20kg of mostly muscle to match Todd Russell's physical appearance because "Todd is just such a great bloke".

Cutting to the chase he said: "That doesn't mean I had any idea what he went through down there. We are

trying to do justice to the people who rescued them and to the memory of Larry Knight. If we've done that we've done our job".

Mr Knight, played by Simon Lyndon from *Chopper* and *Underbelly*, was killed in the Anzac Day 2006 rockfall that trapped Mr Russell and Mr Webb underground for 14 days.

Tele-movie director Glendyn Ibin said that on three previous visits to the Tamar Valley he had been captivated by its amazing landscape and by how the triangular form of the mine's head-frame dominated Beaconsfield.

"I'm trying to make a film about a story and an event, but also a place and a community," he said. "Every time we've tried to shoot some landscape and tried to pick out certain details of Beaconsfield as a place, to try and put it into context as a small place and a beautiful one."

Ibin said he had also discovered that the real Mr Russell and Mr Webb were two "very different individuals".

He said having such different personalities locked together in mortal danger provided the grist for a wonderful drama. "It's an opportunity to tell a story that a lot of people know, including taxi drivers in Melbourne," he said.

Mr Russell and Mr Webb said they owed it to the public to make sure the disaster story was told right.



LOOK-ALIKE: Carney, left, and the real Nobby Russell.



WHO'S WHO: Hulme, left, with the real Todd Russell



CHECK-IN: Lachy Hulme, who plays Todd Russell, and a crew member on the set. Pictures: ROSS MARSDEN