

# Program Publicity

X August 2011

*Documentary*

## ***NED'S HEAD***

7.30pm Sunday 4 September, SBS ONE

***Can a team of forensic scientists solve the mystery of Ned Kelly's skull?***

On the morning of 11 November 1880, legendary Australian outlaw Ned Kelly was hanged at Old Melbourne Gaol. What happened to the body of one of Australia's most iconic figures after he died has been a huge source of controversy and mystery ever since.

In 1978, the supposed skull of Ned Kelly was stolen from its display case at Old Melbourne Gaol and was lost for more than 30 years, until a West Australian farmer handed it into authorities in 2009. A team of forensic scientists at the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM) were then given the task of identifying it.

*Ned's Head* records every step of this investigation, as the team venture on a year-long quest to discover the skull's true identity. With unique access to the VIFM's team of forensic experts, they use the latest scientific techniques, combined with historic research, to try and crack the 120 year old case.

One of the major leads the scientific team has is Ned Kelly's death mask, made just an hour after his execution when his body was still warm. Using photographs, models and CT scans, they compare the death mask to the skull to try and get a match.

Meanwhile, the historical team investigate Ned Kelly's autopsy to find out what could have been done with his remains following his death, and learn if an autopsy was conducted at all.

As the scientific team search for answers, they pursue the difficult task of extracting DNA from the old remains. What they find is set to make headlines and change recorded history forever.

After 12 months of investigation the VIFM team reach a result, but in their attempt to solve the mystery of Ned's head, they discover much more than the identity of the mysterious skull. It seems Ned Kelly is as controversial in death as he was in life.

*Ned's Head* is produced by Prospero Productions.

**ENDS**

Interviews are available with:

**Our story:** In November 2009, the Victorian State Coroner formally opened an inquiry to determine the identity of a skull claimed to belong to infamous Australian outlaw, Ned Kelly.

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SBS

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Images are available for download from [www.sbs.com.au/publicity](http://www.sbs.com.au/publicity).

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**About the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM):**

The Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM) provides medico-legal expertise to a range of criminal justice agencies and the legal and medical professions.

Its doctors assess, treat and support victims of crime and its scientists provide leading-edge analytical services.

The Centre for Human Identification (CHI) is a specialist group of pathologists, clinicians, radiologists, odontologists, (dentists) anthropologists and molecular biologists who work together in the identification of the living and the dead.

The team use their expertise to identify possible offenders as well as unknown bodies and skeletal remains. This work is particularly important in responding to mass disasters and humanitarian investigations involving mass graves and possible human rights abuses.

In the past they have assisted with human identification in the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Burma, East Timor, Sri Lanka, the Solomon Islands and Indonesia. In the Asia Pacific region they have played a major role in the response to the tsunami, the Bali bombing 2005, and closer to home, the Victorian bushfires of 2009.

