



**Ilbjerri Aboriginal & Torres Strait
Islander Theatre Co-op**

Presents

CHOPPED LIVER

By

Kamarra Bell-Wykes



Synopsis:

Lynne & Jim could be anyone's Aunt or Uncle. They've been married now for over ten years. Pretty good effort – especially for Blakfellas! And they've both been around the block – working, protesting, jail, partying, and kids. Now they've come home to country. But can they leave their past behind? They both need to face the facts. It's about knowing that people with hepatitis C are so much more than "Chopped Liver".

Chopped Liver is a blak comedy play about Hepatitis C, written by Kamarra Bell-Wykes and produced by Ilbjerri Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theatre in Victoria.

Running Time: 50 minutes (no interval)

Audience: Suitable for audiences age 16+. Performance includes drug references.

A short history of the show:

In 2005 Ilbjerri was approached by the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS) to develop a play that would communicate Hepatitis C prevention and education messages in a culturally appropriate way to the Indigenous community. As part of Ilbjerri's Indigenous Community Partnership Program (which acknowledges Indigenous organisations as key experts in a range of fields), the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) was approached to become a Partner on the project.

VACCHO already had a pre-existing partnership with the Hepatitis C Council of Victoria. A project steering committee consisting of the VACCHO, Hepatitis C Council, Ilbjerri and DHS was established. The steering committee supported the development of the script with Playwright Kamarra Bell-Wykes and Dramaturge (Script Doctor) John Romeril. The committee was also integral in the promotion of the performances within communities.

The show first hit the road in November 2006, and has subsequently gone on to tour to over fifty communities and prisons in Victoria and South Australia over the last two years. With interest continuing to grow, an even bigger run is in the pipeline this year, with plans to tour through NSW, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia.

The show has been devised specifically to be performed in non-theatre spaces. Shows have been presented in a range of settings including health centre foyers, Elders residential homes, local performing arts centres and other community spaces. The show can be presented basically anywhere – so long as it's indoors (to allow for the video projection).

Live performance, particularly Comedy, is an effective tool in breaking down social boundaries where certain concepts and issues are considered too confronting to speak about. *Chopped Liver* has proven to be particularly effective in this sense, raising awareness and opening opportunities for discussion, prevention and support.

What are the key messages of play?

Writer Kamarra Bell-Wykes says the play explores the issues around needle use and tattooing, attitudes, discrimination, relationships, peer groups, community attitudes, bullying and rejection, and myth busting. As the lead male character Jim says "knowledge is power!"

The play starts in 1998 and you're taken along the journey of the two characters – Lynne and Jim – over 20 years to 2006. It's about their stories. They're from a small country town – could be anywhere in Victoria. They move to Melbourne, and back again and have a kid. But the whole time that they're traveling, they're traveling with this hepatitis C virus and the play is about how their relationship with the virus changes over those 20 years. So hepatitis C is actually another character in the play.

Hepatitis C is something that's from their past, in their youth. But now, 10, 15 years later, even though they've got kids, got jobs and living straight, it's something they're still living with. Mistakes they make unknowingly come back and haunt them and now it is about trying to live with their consequences. But it doesn't have to be a negative, life damaging experience. Things are what you make them, so that's what the show is trying to show.

It's also putting hepatitis C on the same par as diabetes and heart problems. Blakfellas have so many health issues already – so it's just another one to add to the mix. But when we take responsibility and own these things, that's when we can positively address them.

About Ilbijerri:

Formed by Indigenous Theatre Artists and Community Members in 1990, Ilbijerri is the longest running professional, self-determining Indigenous Theatre organisation and the only one in Victoria. Ilbijerri's purpose is to create Indigenous theatre for Indigenous people that challenges, reaffirms, celebrates and connects. Ilbijerri is an Indigenous members' co-operative and all its key staff are Indigenous.