

CREATING VERBATIM THEATRE

**Exploring the gap between public inquiry and
private pain**

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For the Mountains' People

Abstract

Using arts-informed/narrative inquiry as its methodology, this thesis examines the creation of a performance text using verbatim theatre techniques. The play, *Remembering One Day in December*, evolved from the interweaving of personal narratives taken from volunteer participants, who were impacted by the 1999 Glenbrook Rail Disaster, when a crowded commuter train collided with the almost stationary Indian Pacific. It also includes documentary extracts from the first of three Public Inquiries into the event.

From multiple perspectives, yet with shared motifs, the play tells the story of the day, the disillusionment with anticipated trauma support and concludes with the participants' slow but inspiring journeys towards healing.

The thesis also explores the increasing interest in performance as a research tool, because of its capacity to comprehensively present a multiplicity of complex truths. Also at this time of centralized media ownership and homogenized, reductionist media content, this thesis also suggests that the verbatim theatre form, so particularly dependent on complex cultural narratives, could be evolving as a bridge between mainstream stages and community concerns, where community can be either global or regional and some of its concerns are no longer the province of news and current affairs.

Lastly this thesis offers the researcher an opportunity to reflexively examine the editing process in the construction of the play text. It describes the researcher's journey from interviewer to story custodian and analyses how this shift in relationship affected the text's content and structure, where the intention to deliver an authentic and compelling piece of verbatim theatre remained paramount.

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