

Premieres Sunday 13 September at 9:30pm on SBS ONE

COMMUNITY COP

Follows Constable Andrew “AJ” Allen working with the young African refugee community in the Flemington high-rise estate in inner city Melbourne.

www.screenaustralia.gov.au/showcases/communitycop

**For interviews and images please contact:
David Brown at SBS, 02 9430 3792, David.Brown@sbs.com.au**

Community Cop is a Screen Australia National Documentary Program in association with 360 Degree Films. Developed with the assistance of Film Victoria. Produced in association with SBS Independent. © Screen Australia 2008.



SCREEN
AUSTRALIA



FILM
VICTORIA

Premieres Sunday 13 September at 9:30pm on SBS ONE

Key Credits

Featuring – Constable Andrew Allen, Ahmed Ahmed, Ahmed Dini

Producer – Sally Ingleton

Director – Helen Gaynor

Editors – Ben Eriksen, Peter Friedrichs

Camera – Helen Gaynor, Peter Zakharov

Sound – Chris Izzard, Mark Tarpey, Peter Graham, Ben Banks

Production Managers - Kirrilly Brentnall, Kate Pappas

Music – Group 120 - Erin Baker, Yung Philly, Camilo Martin, Jay Taranto, Asmeret Tikue, Aaron Stephanus, Jonathon Guigan

Music Producer - Burkhard Dallwitz

Narrator – Petra Kalive

Executive Producer – Anna Grieve

Duration – 52 minutes

Website – www.screenaustralia.gov.au/showcases/communitycop

Community Cop is a Screen Australia National Documentary Program in association with 360 Degree Films. Developed with the assistance of Film Victoria. Produced in association with SBS Independent. © Screen Australia 2008.

Premieres Sunday 13 September at 9:30pm on SBS ONE

Synopses

One line

On one of the toughest beats in town, a cop lays down his gun and takes up a new style of policing.

One paragraph

On one of the toughest beats in town, a cop lays down his gun and takes up a new style of policing. *Community Cop* follows Constable Andrew "AJ" Allen working with the young African refugee community in the Flemington high-rise estate in inner city Melbourne.

One page

On one of the toughest beats in town, a cop lays down his gun and takes up a new style of policing. *Community Cop* follows Constable Andrew "AJ" Allen working with the young African refugee community in the Flemington high-rise estate in inner city Melbourne.

The estate is home to 4000 people, many of them from war-torn Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia. It is a diverse, volatile and complex neighbourhood with a history of high crime, tough policing, and escalating clashes between the police and young people who often see police as the enemy.

With limited resources but assistance from key community members including youth worker Ahmed Ahmed and youth 'troublemaker' turned advocate Ahmed Dini, AJ sets out to earn the trust of this suspicious community. It is a tough job, when some even within his own ranks regard this community policing as a waste of time and money.

Premieres Sunday 13 September at 9:30pm on SBS ONE

Production Story

The way director Helen Gaynor puts it, making a film like *Community Cop* is like holding the tip of a tiger's tail as the tiger is running around.

"You feel like you might lose your grip at any moment and you just have to try to hang on for dear life and go wherever it goes," she says, laughing.

Gaynor, who wrote, directed and shot the one-hour documentary, works by immersing herself in the world of her subjects; filming action as it unfolds, often unable to predict how a story will develop.

Gaynor began researching *Community Cop* in early 2007 after discussing with producer Sally Ingleton, of 360 Degree Films, the possibility of making a film about the racism and misunderstanding experienced by young Muslims in Australia.

The pair had successfully collaborated on an earlier documentary, *Welcome 2 My Deaf World*, and hoped to work together again.

"What Helen loves doing, and does very well, is having the time to wander into environments with a camera and shoot things as they happen," Ingleton says.

"Helen came across the community policing program at Flemington high-rise estate, which is home to 4000 people, most of them from war-torn Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia."

The angle gave the filmmakers a chance to cover the story from two sides: that of a policeman who was trying to break the mould by policing in a very proactive way and a community struggling to prosper in a volatile and overcrowded government housing estate with a history of high crime and tough policing.

"The Victoria Police media unit was extremely helpful although we had rigorous discussions about what the documentary might mean for the police force," Gaynor says. "I told them that my work was 'warts and all' so I couldn't promise that it would be a good story. They were happy for the public to know (and understand) what they do even if it wasn't a squeaky clean picture."

Between October 2007 and March 2008, Gaynor immersed herself in the story, following the work of Constable Andrew "AJ" Allen as he settles into his new role as the community liaison officer based at Flemington, and capturing drama, tension, conflict and redemption as issues between the police and the community flare up and are resolved.

She worked hard to gain the trust of the African-Australian young men, and some perform in the rap song that opens the film. "These young men had a very rough ride with the mainstream media," Gaynor says. "They feel very burnt by the media, but they were very generous in helping me and allowing me to spend a lot of time hanging around them with the camera."

Premieres Sunday 13 September at 9:30pm on SBS ONE

In particular, Helen befriended Ahmed Dini, a young African man with a chequered past who is a strong advocate for youth on the estate. His trust helped her to gain the intimate access required for the film and to learn of events as they happened.

“With this sort of filmmaking it is all about planning,” Gaynor says. “You talk to people, find out what’s on in the next few days, then strategise about where you should be. At the same time you keep an eye on the media to monitor things that are unpredictable and uncontrollable. I wasn’t on the spot when a lot of incidents actually happened, but we followed the behind-the-scenes action that you don’t see in the news. As soon as something happened I would go and be with AJ and the community members to catch their response.”

Equally unpredictable was the certainty that a good film would emerge from six months of filming and 130 hours of footage.

“There was always the risk of not having a good story at the end of it all. When I started, Leading Senior Constable Glenn Birt was going to be the main character and he got offered a position in the Northern Territory and suddenly he was leaving,” she says.

“I didn’t know whether his replacement would make a good character in the film or whether they would allow me to follow them around with the camera. Fortunately AJ was a terrific character and it all worked.”

There also was doubt about residents on the estate.

“You never know for sure whether, after a month of filming, someone’s going to turn around and tell you to rack off, because they can of course. It’s a documentary; they are not being paid.”

Screen Australia’s executive producer Anna Grieve is convinced the film will give the audience a powerful insight into the African community living on the estate revealing how many of the difficulties between police and community arise from misunderstanding and lack of resources”.

“This is better than *Law & Order* or *NCIS* on a tough New York crime beat, what Helen has been able to capture is real life at the front line of policing. There are challenges for both sides... It’s difficult to be a cop in this community and its difficult to be a young African man living on the estate but both sides are working hard to understand each other,” Grieve says.

The filmmakers will also be working with SBS and Screen Australia on a larger refugee website to accompany the documentary, featuring a whole range of refugee stories from a number of communities and music.

Gaynor hopes the film will make the audience consider the role of police, by showing a largely unknown but effective form of policing.

“I also hope that people will embrace the African-Australian community as fellow Australians and fellow human beings,” Gaynor says.

Premieres Sunday 13 September at 9:30pm on SBS ONE

“I think the mainstream media has fed a lot of misconception and prejudice, which has made an already difficult process for these people even more difficult.

“A lot of these kids have been here for much longer than they were in the countries that they’ve fled. It’s very hard for them when they keep getting treated as different. Mostly they’re just bored teenagers.”

Ingleton concurs: “The story is set in inner city Melbourne but it could be in inner-city Sydney, Perth or anywhere in Australia. I hope that audiences will get an insight into what goes on in the life of a young African kid, who has come here from war-torn Somalia or Eritrea. They just want access to normal things, they want to be treated as equals and to be respected.”

Premieres Sunday 13 September at 9:30pm on SBS ONE

Director Helen Gaynor writes about the background of the estate and community policing.

The Flemington Public Housing Estate in inner city Melbourne was built in the 1960s, part of what the police call “the triangle”, with similar estates built in neighbouring North Melbourne and Kensington. The estates have been first port of call for successive waves of immigrants to Australia – Italians, Greeks, Turks, Vietnamese and since the early 1990s, people from the Horn of Africa. Most of the Africans have fled terrible wars in their own countries. Many of their children have grown up in Australia and the estate is their home.

Flemington is also well known as the centre of the Spring Racing Carnival, one of the biggest events in Melbourne. Thousands of people flock to the Flemington Race Course in late spring, dressed to the nines and in a mood to party. The highlight of the carnival is the world renowned Melbourne Cup. The main street, Race Course Road is filled with race goers in their frocks and hats and suits mingling with African women in traditional dress and long flowing robes.

The estate is also home to Anglo Australians, many on welfare. It attracts its fare share of drug dealers and ex-crooks. For the local police at Flemington Police Station, it is a heady mix.

In late 2005 a spate of robberies occurred during the Spring Racing carnival. ‘Soft targets’ such as people who were drunk and older people were targeted by groups described by the victims as dark-skinned youths. Mobile phones were stolen and sometimes weapons like small knives were produced to persuade the hand over. The police cracked down on the local teenagers on the estate—searches were frequent and the public and the kids grew increasingly hostile to what they saw as constant harassment and racial profiling. They retaliated by throwing rocks and things went from bad to worse. There were fears that a riot would take place and so a public meeting was held at which the community voiced their anger at policing methods to senior members of the force, and members of the state government.

The police responded by appointing a community liaison officer—the first in the state to be appointed to a specific police station. Leading Senior Constable Glenn Birt established the role and gradually the tension calmed and the community and police began to understand each other better. After two years, and a period of relative calm, tensions between police and estate youths were again on the rise. Leading Senior Constable Birt decided to move on and this is where our story begins.

Premieres Sunday 13 September at 9:30pm on SBS ONE

Interview with Constable Andrew “AJ” Allen

When Constable Andrew “AJ” Allen began working as the Victoria Police community liaison officer in the inner Melbourne suburb of Flemington in late 2007, the job came with an unusual condition.

For several months, AJ’s every move was to be filmed as part of the documentary *Community Cop*, an arrangement set up with his predecessor in the role, Constable Glenn Birt, and Inspector Nigel Howard, who developed the community policing initiative.

Participating in the documentary—which follows AJ as he settles into his role and deals with issues that arise in the volatile, high-density Flemington housing estate where he spends up to 40 per cent of his time—proved intrusive.

“I was new in the role and I was still feeling my way,” he says.

“It was difficult at times to have the added pressure of having someone looking over my shoulder. But you do get used to it and you have to make allowances. Depending on who I was with, it could either be a negative or a positive. Some people would play up to the camera while others refused to be filmed at all.”

In the long run, AJ hopes the film will help by educating people about the hardships faced by newly arrived Australians, particularly those who live at the high-rise estate.

“We bring these people in and we give them somewhere to live but there’s no real infrastructure for the vast majority. There’s nothing for the youth to do and that’s where all the problems come from,” he says.

“They don’t have any of the resources that most Australians take for granted and they are just really left to their own devices.”

AJ, a former air force police officer who has served in some of the world’s toughest hotspots, has made “massive inroads” at the estate, with statistics showing a big reduction in antisocial behaviour among the estate’s youth. His presence has given the community confidence that its voice is being heard by the police.

He hopes the film will open the eyes of fellow officers to the advantages of community policing—a concept many discredit.

“You can get so tunnel-visioned when you are doing general-duties policing. You are very busy and you’ll get called to the estate because there’s been a theft, or criminal damage or domestic violence; you go in, you sort it out and you leave.

“But when you have the opportunity to go into the community and spend some time, you understand that they’ve got nothing to do so they’re bored, and when the boredom kicks in, the stakes get higher about what they will do to keep themselves entertained. What starts out as a bit of boredom can escalate into a major problem.”

Premieres Sunday 13 September at 9:30pm on SBS ONE

Biographies

Ahmed Ahmed

Ahmed Ahmed was born in Somalia. He was holidaying with his sister at his uncle's house when the war broke out in the early 1990s in Mogadishu.

His father agreed that they should stay with the uncle until the fighting stopped which they all assumed would be in a few weeks.

When it appeared that the fighting was not likely to stop for months or maybe years, Ahmed Ahmed moved with his uncle, cousins and sister to Egypt, where he attended school.

As a teenager, he and his sister applied to come to Australia as refugees and were sponsored by friends of friends, who welcomed the pair into their home.

He completed school at Debney Park High School and, after doing casual work at his local primary school decided to become a qualified youth worker.

Now in his late 20s, Ahmed Ahmed works part-time with Jesuit Social Services as one of a team of youth workers on the Flemington housing estate, where he lives with his wife and two young daughters.

Ahmed Dini

Ahmed Dini was two years old when his mother fled from the war in Somalia with him and three siblings. With little Ahmed strapped to her back, she walked with her children more than 150 kms to reach the Kenyan border

For the next few years the family lived a precarious life in refugee camps.

At the age of eight, his family was accepted into Australia as part of the refugee program and settled in Victoria. Ahmed Dini attended Debney Park High School, completing his VCE three years ago. Now aged 20, he is enrolled in politics at Victoria University.

In 2006 Ahmed Dini was named Moonee Valley Youth Citizen of the year for his work with the African community. He has received awards from Victoria Police and other organisations for his community work, and was nominated as Young Muslim of the Year in 2007. He was selected to be part of a training program for young Muslim leaders in the same year.

Ahmed coaches the Flemington Eagles Under 18s soccer team. He lives at the North Melbourne housing estate with his parents and four siblings.

Premieres Sunday 13 September at 9:30pm on SBS ONE

About the filmmakers

Sally Ingleton – Producer

Sally Ingleton is a partner in 360 Degree Films and has been producing and directing award-winning documentaries for 20 years. Specialising in science, arts, history and social issues, she has made programs for the BBC, Channel 4, Discovery Channel, National Geographic, ABC Television, SBS Television and NHK.

Sally's recent work includes *Seed Hunter* and *2 Mums and a Dad*, which won Best Documentary at the Sydney Film Festival Dendy Awards and Best Documentary at the Australian Teachers of Media Awards. In 2006, Sally produced *Welcome 2 My Deaf World*, which was nominated for Best Documentary at both the Australian Film Institute and Australian Teacher's of Media Awards. It won the most popular film at the Real Life on Film Documentary Film Festival Melbourne.

Other credits include *Muddy Waters: Life and Death on the Great Barrier Reef*, which won the Jury Prize at Japan's Festival Earth Vision and the Best Environment and Conservation Award at the Japanese Wildlife Film Festival; *Painting Country*, which won the Silver Chris Award at the Columbus Film Festival; *Mao's New Suit*, which won Best Documentary at Chicago; and *The Tenth Dancer*, which screened at festivals around the world and won awards in Japan, Chicago and San Francisco. It also won Best Documentary at the 1994 Australian Teachers of Media Awards.

Sally is currently producing the international documentary *Murder in the Snow* for the BBC and SBS.

Helen Gaynor – Director

Helen Gaynor has been a director in documentary and drama for more than 20 years. After graduating from Swinburne Film and Television school, she was trained by ABC TV where she worked for several years, directing and producing everything from *The 7.30 Report* to *Countdown*, and various television dramas, *House Rules* and *Inside Running*.

She has produced, written and directed several documentaries including *Impunidad*, which won the Chris Award at Columbus Film Festival and a Silver Star at Chicago Film Festival; *The Election of the Century*, nominated for UN Peace Prize; *For the Defence*; *A Little Inconvenience*; *Nurses*; *Welcome 2 My Deaf World* and *Community Cop*.

Her drama credits include *The D-Generation*, *A Country Practice*, *Neighbours*, *Home and Away*, *Big Sky*, *High Fliers*, *Something in the Air*, and *MDA*.

She combines a career as a freelance drama director with documentary direction, and teaching.

Premieres Sunday 13 September at 9:30pm on SBS ONE

Anna Grieve – Executive Producer

Anna Grieve has executive produced many award-winning documentaries and productions across a range of platforms since joining Film Australia in 2001. Her recent work includes the *Hidden Treasures* and *The Art of War* series with Betty Churcher, *The Prime Minister is Missing*, *I'll Call Australia Home*, *Rosa's Journey*, *Community Cop*, *Dhakiyarr Vs the King*, *Silent Storm*, Bruce Petty's *Human Contraptions* series, *Land of the Morning Star* and the Logie Award winner *Who Killed Dr Bogle & Mrs Chandler?*

Anna's other productions as Executive Producer include the 10-part *MobiDocs* anthology produced with the National Film Board of Canada and the online productions *Ceremony*, *Pacific Stories*, and *Moving History*. Anna is responsible for the award-winning teaching resource *Screen Australia Digital Learning* which was a recent finalist in the 2008 International Focal Awards in London.

Prior to joining Film Australia, Anna worked as a producer/writer/director on a range of productions such as *Federation* and *Myths of Childhood* and directed documentaries including *Pram Factory*, *Lake Pedder* and *Getting Even - Women in Australian Politics*. She is a former Film Australia and AFTRS Board member.

Premieres Sunday 13 September at 9:30pm on SBS ONE

References

Community Cop showcase page

www.screenaustralia.gov.au/showcases/communitycop

360 Degree Films

<http://www.360degreefilms.com.au/>

African Australian online resource

<http://www.africanoz.com.au>

Victoria Police

<http://www.police.vic.gov.au>

Jesuit Social Services

<http://www.jss.org.au>

Moonee Valley City Council

<http://www.mooneevalley.vic.gov.au>

Office of Housing

<http://www.housing.vic.gov.au>

Flemington and Kensington Community Website

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~flemweb/>

Community Gardens - Sustainable Gardening Australia

http://www.sgaonline.org.au/info_communitygardens.html