



# NO DISTINGUISHING FEATURES.

People with disabilities are given a  
roadmap for their life from birth. These  
Six people tore theirs to shreds.

# SYNOPSIS

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No Distinguishing Features showcases the stories of six people with disabilities from across Australia and New Zealand. Six people who were given a strict roadmap to life from the moment they were born. Six people who went on to tear those roadmaps to shreds.

From a young Paralympian's journey to achieve his childhood dream, to a mother fighting for her intellectually disabled son's right to a fair wage; these people share their lives with honesty, humour and heartbreak.

"I hope that when people watch my story, they'll learn that the greatest hardships I have faced in life are not overcoming my disability, but rather overcoming the limitations, boundaries, and expectations that others place on me because of my disability."

**Rowan Crothers**

*Paralympian and former World-Record Holder*

"Intimate, honest and confronting." "Something everyone should see."

**Hamish Kearvell**

*Wavelength Fresh 92.7*

"Such a great story of our history of people living with disability."

**Valasca Lehmann**

*Occupational Therapist*

"It's a great documentary"

**Madeleine Morris**

*ABC News Breakfast*

# THE CAST

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## *Rod*

In 1942 a boy in New Zealand is born with no arms. The hospital staff give his mum two options: place him in an institution for life or opt for euthanasia and they'll say he died at birth. She refuses both and takes her baby home. He goes on to become a Lawyer, then a Judge and finally ends up running the very same institution he could've been sent to as a baby.



## *Rowan*

A boy is born prematurely to a deathly ill mother. She's told he may never walk, let alone run. Mum dedicates her life to supporting him into an uncertain future. Then everything changes in 2008 when young Rowan sees the Beijing Paralympics on TV. Inspired, Rowan begins a strict training regime and in a few short years becomes a champion athlete, winning a Commonwealth gold medal. In 2016 he achieves his childhood dream of representing Australia at the Paralympics in Rio.

## *Judith*

Born with Cerebral Palsy in the 1950's in "a one-horse town that's still a one-horse town" Judith's father refuses her Doctor's recommendations to institutionalise her. Instead he relocates the family to Sydney to seek help and teaches her to read in between double shifts at the Ford Motor Factory. Judith soon learns to talk and though she's judged too disabled for high school a teacher urges her "don't listen to them, if you want to do something, do it!" Judith takes that to heart and goes on to become an activist, amateur daredevil and a trailblazer.







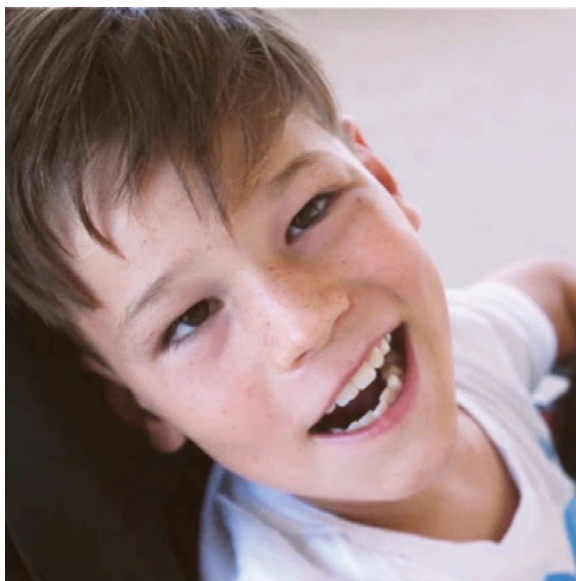
## *The McLeods*

In 1938 baby Jenny is diagnosed with “spastic paralysis”. The attending doctor deems that she’s impossible to educate and will die before her twelfth birthday. Her parents think otherwise and band together with other families to form The Spastic Centre in Sydney, Australia; now known as Cerebral Palsy Alliance. They become world leaders in supporting people with disabilities and transform the lives of thousands, setting new standards for housing, education and employment for people with disabilities.

## *Michael*

The Australian government introduces a new wage test for workers with disabilities.

Michael, a man with an intellectual disability, takes the test and is deemed to be 14% as productive as a ‘normal worker’ and his pay is dropped to \$1.78 an hour. Outraged, his 76-year-old mum takes the government to court. After years of legal battles they win their case and Michael, along with over ten thousand other workers, is finally fairly compensated.



## *Fin*

Baby Fin is born with a myriad of problems and spends his first Christmas in hospital, suffering from seizures. But, despite this difficult start to life, Fin is soon renowned around his hometown for his infectious grin and unswerving determination. Despite medical assessments that he will never walk or talk, at 7 years old Fin becomes an overnight internet sensation when he runs in his school’s 100 metre race. Young Fin’s life is only just getting started and these days Fin’s mother believes “he will achieve whatever he wants to achieve.”

# THE TEAM

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No Distinguishing Features was made with a deliberately small team to enable us to build a close rapport with our interview subjects. Our goal was to create a platform for some amazing people to tell their stories in their own way.

Kevin Roberts is a prolific Screenwriter with credits across a huge range of creative writing forms. He started penning sketch comedy in New Zealand, moved into stage plays and then television. He holds credits on over 400 hours of broadcast content including screenplays for hit Australian Television shows *Heartbreak High* and *All Saints* and co-produced the award-winning documentary *Refugee Like Me*.



Hamish Gibbs Ludbrook is a Filmmaker with experience in Screenwriting and Editing and has worked with Kevin on a range of projects while also freelancing extensively in post-production on television and documentaries.



The post-production team is made up of Jesper Klittmark, Tom Scott-Toft and Gareth Evans as well as the composing team Plan 9, whose credits include *They Shall Not Grow Old*, *What We Do in the Shadows* and *The Hobbit*.

**Writers, Directors and Producers** – Hamish Gibbs Ludbrook and Kevin Roberts

**Editor and Associate Producer** – Jesper Klittmark

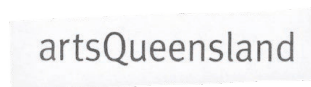
**Art Director** – Marc Muir

**Sound Editor and Mixer** – Tom Scott-Toft

**Colourist** – Gareth Evans

**Original Music** – Plan 9

This film was supported by the Gold Coast Council, Arts Queensland, Documentary Australia Foundation and Mable Community Grants



# THE STORY

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No Distinguishing Features got its start late one night in 2014 when Kevin, struggling to sleep, tuned into the Glasgow Commonwealth Games and watched a young Australian paralympian swimmer, Rowan Crothers, set a new world record in the 100m freestyle.

During his post-race interview Rowan discussed his passion for documentary filmmaking and outlined his plan to explore the streets of Glasgow with a camera in hand. The next day Kevin, then Head of Screenwriting at Bond University's Film & Television School, excitedly suggested to the University that they offer Rowan a full scholarship. The University was enthusiastic until they discovered a slight speed-bump; what Kevin hadn't realized was that despite Rowan's significant height and build, the boy was only 16. A touch young for Uni. Cue a red-faced Kevin!

But Rowan had made an impression and two years later Kevin proposed to Hamish, a former student, that they get in touch with Rowan about making a film on Rowan's story. Soon after, Kevin, Hamish and Rowan sat down for a coffee and started discussing the project that would become "No Distinguishing Features."

The film's scope quickly snowballed and a series of interviews took Kevin and Hamish right around Australia, across the ditch to New Zealand and even to Scandinavia. Finding financial support for the project proved difficult; stories of people living with disabilities are rarely seen as financially viable on film. But Hamish & Kevin weren't deterred. They largely self-funded the project over four years while maintaining other jobs and obtaining a series of small grants.

The key ethos behind the project was to make the film in close consultation with the interviewees. Early cuts of the film were screened for the subjects and the resulting discussions significantly shaped the final film's tone and scale. There were many hurdles to overcome along the way, but the filmmakers' close relationship with the interview subjects was a massive motivation in getting their stories onto screen.

With the support of our interview subjects, our grant providers and the amazing dedication of our post-production and composing teams, the film is now finally ready to be shared with the world.

We are confident you will be moved and inspired by the amazing people featured in:

*No Distinguishing Features*

# PRESS

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## **Cinema Australia Article**

<https://cinemaaustralia.com.au/2020/08/25/no-distinguishing-features-showcases-the-stories-of-people-with-disabilities-see-the-new-trailer-here/>

## **Film Ink Article**

<https://www.filmink.com.au/public-notice/new-inspirational-film-launching-on-friday/>

## **ABC News Breakfast (interview with Paralympian Rowan Crothers)**

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1483052248548392&extid=9btVknFYPrT4xVAk>

## **Wavelength Fresh 92.7 (interview with filmmaker Hamish Ludbrook)**

<https://omny.fm/shows/fresh/restarting-adelaides-live-music-scene-14-september>

# TECH SPECS

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Runtime: 81 minutes

Language: English with Closed Captions

Format: 25fps, HD, 16:9

# CONTACT

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