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BBC WORLDWIDE AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND ANNOUNCES BANISHED, FIRST LOCAL PRODUCTION FOR BBC FIRST

Following the award-winning and critically acclaimed *Top of the Lake*, BBC Worldwide Australia and New Zealand has announced its next local commission, which will screen on BBC First on Foxtel in 2015.

Banished is an epic seven part series from award-winning writer/creator **Jimmy McGovern** (story producer *Redfern Now*) loosely inspired by events in the 18th century when Britain established a penal colony on the other side of the world. Starring **David Wenham** (*Top Of The Lake*), **Russell Tovey** (*Being Human*), **Myanna Buring** (*Ripper Street*), **Julian Rhind-Tutt** (*The Hour*) and **Ryan Corr** (*Wolf Creek 2*), the series starts filming in Sydney this April before moving to Manchester in the UK. The series has been co-commissioned by BBC Two in the UK and BBC Worldwide Australia and New Zealand.

International award-winning independent production companies RSJ Films (*Accused, The Street*) and See-Saw Films (*Top Of The Lake, The King's Speech, Shame*) have joined forces for the first time to co-produce *Banished*. The series will be the first locally produced show to screen on BBC Worldwide ANZ's new premium drama and comedy channel BBC First, which will launch on Foxtel in August this year.

Natalie Edgar, Director of Television BBC Worldwide ANZ, said: "This is a very exciting first commission for BBC First. It exemplifies all the things that BBC drama stands for with outstanding talent on both sides of the camera. Jimmy McGovern has been responsible for some of the most ground-breaking drama series created over the years and after the huge success of *Top of the Lake* I'm delighted to be working with See-Saw Films again as well as the talented team at RSJ."

This ambitious co-production charts the lives, loves, relationships and battle for survival of a group of convicts, the marines that guard them and men who govern them in the early days of this settlement.

Jimmy McGovern says, "How the first convicts survived is the best story I've come across in over thirty years as a dramatist. When you've got something like that, you don't worry about the narrative; you just concentrate on the characters. That is what we did. Consequently I don't think I've ever written anything so character-driven."

Jimmy McGovern's fast-paced fictional seven-part series opens at dawn in New South Wales, Australia, 1788. Tents are pitched and there is a scattering of timber buildings on a strip of land between the impenetrable bush and the mighty Pacific Ocean.

It is here that the convicts transported on the First Fleet and their masters are waking up to another sweltering hot day in a place where anything can happen and death stalks everyone. With supplies running out and ill-equipped for life on this inhospitable shoreline, who will survive the next ten days?

David Wenham (*Top Of The Lake*) plays Governor Arthur Phillip a pragmatic idealist who hopes to turn this ramshackle settlement from penal colony to land of opportunity for all, while his nemesis Major Ross played by **Joseph Millson** (*Holby City*) thinks the only chance of survival is to rule with an iron fist.

Yet all that seems unshakeable are the passionate bonds of love and friendship forged between convicts: Elizabeth Quinn (**Myanna Buring**), Tommy Barrett (**Julian Rhind-Tutt**) and James Freeman (**Russell Tovey**). But before long this shared devotion is destined to challenge the very doctrines on which the fledgling colony has been founded.

Also featuring in this epic series about human courage and endeavour, love, loss and impossible choices are: **Ryan Corr** (*Wolf Creek 2*) as love-lorn Private MacDonald; **Adam Nagaitis** (*The Inbetweeners 2*) as the loathed Private Buckley; **Ewen Bremner** (*Accused*) as the pious Reverend Johnson, with **Genevieve O'Reilly** (*The Honourable Woman*) as his selfless wife; **Brooke Harman** (*Dance Academy*) as Deborah, Governor Phillip's housekeeper; **Orla Brady** (*Doctor Who Christmas Special 2013*) plays intuitive convict Anne Meredith and Joanna Vanderham (*The Paradise*) is the dangerously beautiful convict Katherine McVitie.

Banished is written and devised by Jimmy McGovern and Shaun Duggan (*Accused*) has written episode five. Sita Williams is producer and she also executive produces alongside Roxy Spencer and Jimmy McGovern. Emile Sherman, Iain Canning, and Jamie Laurenson are executive producers for See-Saw Films. Brett Popplewell (*The Moodys*) and Simon Hailey are co-producers. Banished directors are Dan Percival (*Death Comes To Pemberley*) who directs episodes 1 -3 and Jeffrey Walker (*Jack Irish*) directs episodes 4 – 7).

Banished was commissioned by Ben Stephenson, Controller of BBC Drama Commissioning, and Janice Hadlow, the outgoing Controller of BBC Two and is executive produced for the BBC by Polly Hill, Head of BBC Independent Commissioning. Natalie Edgar, Director of Television, leads the co-commission for BBC Worldwide Australia and New Zealand. The drama will be screened on BBC First in Australia and UKTV in New Zealand. BBC Worldwide is the distributor of Banished.

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Notes to editors:

Banished has been endorsed as an official co-production under the UK/Australian co-production treaty.

RSJ Films is an RTS, BAFTA and Emmy winning independent production company founded by Roxy Spencer, Sita Williams and Jimmy McGovern in 2009 which makes television drama and films.

See-Saw Films is an Academy Award® and BAFTA winning independent film production company founded in 2008 by Emile Sherman and Iain Canning. See-Saw operates out of both London and Sydney; Jamie Laurenson heads up the newly formed television division in London.

Top of the Lake has won multiple awards including an Emmy award for Outstanding Cinematography, a Golden Globe for Best Actress for Elisabeth Moss and three AACTA awards including best telefeature or mini-series.

Jimmy McGovern acted as story producer and mentor on three series of Redfern Now, a contemporary Australian series made by Screen Australia and Blackfella productions for ABC TV. It centres on the lives of indigenous Australians living in inner-city Sydney. The drama won the prestigious Australian Logie award in 2013 for most outstanding series and newcomer Shari Sebbens won the Graham Kennedy Award for most outstanding new talent playing Julie in the drama. In January this year Redfern Now went on to scoop the much prized accolade - the AACTA for Best Drama Series.

About BBC Worldwide Australia & New Zealand

Australia & New Zealand (ANZ) is a priority territory for BBC Worldwide, focusing on growth across all its core business areas. Based in Macquarie Park, Sydney, BBC Worldwide ANZ wholly owns five channels: UKTV, BBC Knowledge and CBeebies in Australia; UKTV and BBC Knowledge in New Zealand; and is responsible for the distribution and promotion of BBC World News which transmits in both countries. In August 2014 it will launch a new premium channel BBC First, showcasing premiere drama and comedy on the Foxtel platform in Australia. BBC Worldwide ANZ distributes great British content from the BBC and other producers to all free-to-air and most subscription channels in Australia and New Zealand. It works with partners to bring BBC Worldwide DVDs, magazines, digital apps, innovative products and live events to the local market, as well as offering advertising opportunities for the BBC's world renowned bbc.com news site. Australia is the most successful territory for the current global BBC iPlayer trial.

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