

Film distributor makes an early splash with portaloos tale

By **DANIEL ZIFFER**
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A LOCAL comedy is reviving a long-standing method of selling Australian films — showing them to people.

Mockumentary *Kenny* follows the adventures of a plumber in the portable loo trade.

It opens today but has already travelled to audiences in Perth, Adelaide, Sydney, the Gold Coast, Brisbane and Tasmania.

Sometimes at three screenings a night, *Kenny* (actor Shane Jacobson) has introduced the film and held question and answer sessions at its conclusion.

“I’ve been like a paper airplane in a cyclone, mate,” *Kenny* said yesterday.

“Australia’s a big place — you wouldn’t want to mow it.”

Movie clubs, senior citizens groups and industry assemblies such as the Master Plumbers Association have seen the film before its wide release today, in a move that its distributor hopes will boost its wider fortunes by fostering word-of-mouth support.

Madman Cinema publicist Deb Fryers travelled with the

film and said audiences had responded strongly, both at screenings and through emails sent to *Kenny*’s address at real-life portaloos company, Splash-down.

“We were kind of nervous doing art-house sessions. The audiences are more used to sticking around to listen to Rolf de Heer (*Ten Canoes*) or Robert Connolly (*Three Dollars, The Bank*),” she said.

“But it’s been fascinating from a distributor’s point-of-view to be able to survey an audience, meet them and ask what they want.”

Kenny is on 77 screens across the country, compared with the 247 screens graced by *You, Me and Dupree* — the most popular film in Australia last week.

The pre-release tour follows in the footsteps of filmmakers who have hawked their work — often films that would struggle in multiplexes — around the country. Surf film *Bondi Tsunami* was a recent example of the tour method, also used by Alby Mangels to take his *World Safari* documentaries around the coun-

try in the 1980s.

Acting chief executive of the Australian Film Institute, Jennie Hughes, said getting people into seats was one of the hardest tasks facing filmmakers.

“It’s a tough market,” she said.

“Anything that you can do that might help get the message out there is a really good idea.”

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Kenny (actor Shane Jacobson) toured in character to promote the film.

