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High hopes for film set in sparsely beautiful Goldfields landscape

By [Emma Wynne](#)

Fred Schepisi, the internationally renowned director whose credits include "The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith" and "Evil Angels," says the Goldfields is amazing landscape in which to set a film.

Mr Schepisi has recently come on board to direct "The Drowner," an adaptation of the novel by Robert Drewe, a love story set against the construction of the Goldfields water pipeline.

He and producer Stephen Van Mil have spent the past two days touring the Goldfields by helicopter and familiarising themselves with the landscape of the story.

It's new to Fred Schepisi, and this will be his first project in WA.

"It's pretty amazing country," he says.

"Some it is quite beautiful in its sparseness."

"It's the story of a major achievement, both as a feat of engineering and between two flawed people who are in love and separate and get back together, against all the odds."

"Then there's the whole history of how much illness there was and the problems of not having any water. It will be very exciting."

The film was announced in 2008, however journey from the page to the screen isn't proving a fast or easy one, and the production team don't have a date when filming may start.

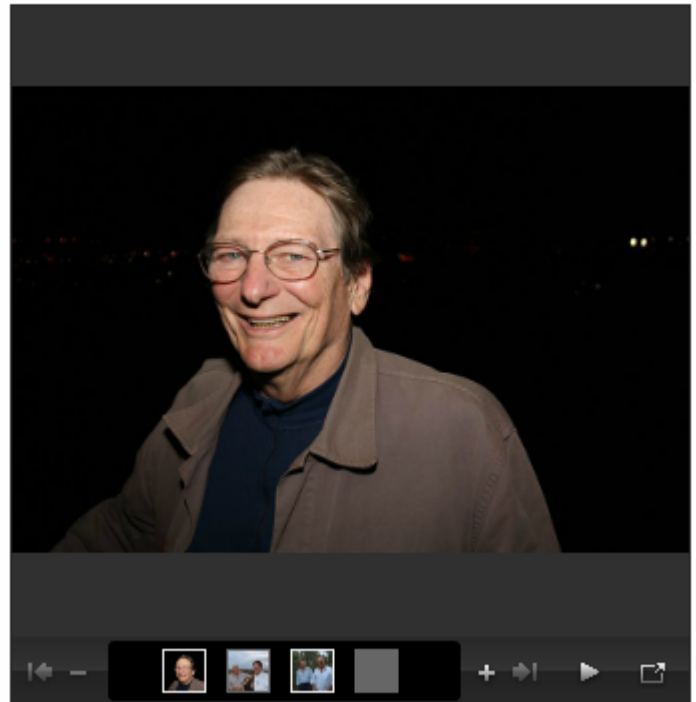
"I'm the director and I expect to be one of the co-producers and my role is to get it developed and work with the writer."

"We've already come up with an outline and a possible way of doing this that could really be visually interesting and different. We'll get stuck into the script pretty soon and getting that right."

"Then we'll cost it out and start going into pre-production."

The budget for the film is around \$50million, with Mel Gibson's production company Icon Films backing the project.

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While many well known names have been mentioned in connection with the film (Cate Blanchett, Liam Neeson and James McAvoy), Fred Schepisi says the project isn't yet ready to approach actors.

"I'm concentrating on getting script right."

" You go out to actors when you've got the material right. I'm sure there are very obvious people, both here and in England who would be very suitable to play in this."

"It's a combination of getting really good actors, but on a budget of the size this film will be, you have to get really good name actors as well."

Despite challenges in bring the film into production, Mr Schepisi says he's very inspired by the project.

"There's just something unique about this film that gives you a chance to do something visually different, as well as telling a great story."

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