

Goldfields tale set for big screen

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The dream of turning Robert Drewe's award-winning novel *The Drowner* into a big-budget movie is a step nearer reality with British veteran Michael Apted close to signing on as director.

Apted, best known for the 7 Up series, *Gorillas in the Mist* and the Bond movie *The World Is Not Enough*, is excited by the prospect of adapting Drewe's romance set against the construction of the Goldfields pipeline, according to producer Stephen Van Mil.

"The writer John Collee and I had a long conference call with Michael on Tuesday and his vision for the movie matches closely with ours," said Van Mil by phone from Kalgoorlie where he is researching the project.

"Michael is a major filmmaker and we are very pleased that he has so much passion for *The Drowner*," he said.

If the deal with Apted is struck, it will be a major step forward for this ambitious project which will be the biggest feature film set in WA. Baz Luhrmann's film *Australia* was shot here but the locations were vague and imaginary.

With Apted involved, it will allow the script to progress to the next stage and the all-important process of casting and location hunting to begin.

This week, the producers have been involved in meetings with potential investors, many of them involved in the mining industry.

Among those locals willing to dig deep to support what is widely regarded as the big West Australian story, is mining magnate Andrew Forrest.

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