

# **MORTIFIED**

**Created by Angela Webber**

## **PRESS KIT**

**An Australian Children's Television Foundation  
and Enjoy Entertainment production**

# MORTIFIED

## SERIES OVERVIEW

On the brink of adolescence a girl's got a lot to deal with; a changing body, a flood of hormones, relentless judgement by her peers, even perhaps the stirrings of a first, unrequited crush...

In **Mortified** Taylor Fry is confronted by the lot. She's a lively, smart-lipped kid with plenty of courage and attitude, but the truth is she feels as if she doesn't belong. She's an outsider in her own, wacky, family...(and with a father known locally as "The Underpant King" who could blame her?). She's a black sheep at school and a misfit amongst her seemingly perfect neighbours.

What's different about Taylor is her flamboyant imagination. Under pressure she retreats into a rich inner world which is played out on the screen in front of us. Animals suddenly talk, Egyptian mummies come to life, her nose grows like Pinocchio's and she takes career advice from St Francis of Assisi.

In spite of these wild flights of fantasy, each episode is firmly anchored in reality. Its core is truthful. The disparate characters that make up the Fry family are chaotic and challenging, but the bond between them is never in doubt. The episode storylines are surprising and occasionally subversive. They're also very funny.

Taylor believes her life is a shambles. We see it's fun. The tone of the show is irreverent, but always affectionate.

**Mortified** taps into the awkward 12 year old within us all.

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### **INSPIRATION FOR MORTIFIED BY SERIES CREATOR ANGELA WEBBER**

The idea for “Mortified” came about five years ago. My then 10 year old daughter was dancing, spiritedly, to some music and she looked as if she was having a lot of fun. On the spur of the moment I leapt to my feet and joined in.

She stopped dancing and stared at me in horror.

The look on her face told me a number of things. She was mortified. I had become an “embarrassing” parent. .... and here was a rich dramatic and comedic vein to be mined.

Until that moment, I had completely forgotten that awkward, childhood feeling of being embarrassed by one’s parents. Suddenly I remembered that for an eleven year old, anything can be cause for humiliation. A parent might laugh too loud, or cheer too enthusiastically at a sport’s carnival. They might act too young... or perhaps too old. They could be too messy, or then again, too fastidious. They might use terms of affection like “darling”, or force you to wear a clumsily, home-knitted jumper. They might volunteer to sing at a school talent evening, or worse still... kiss you good-bye at the school gate.....

The more I thought about it, the funnier the vast array of daily, mortifying, situations seemed. I spoke to friends who admitted their own uncomfortable childhood responses...and what they’d observed in their humiliated offspring. Mortification, I discovered, was a pretty universal reaction.

I also think it marks the beginning of a breaking away from the uncritical devotion to one’s family. It’s when we all begin to find out that - with the best will in the world - nobody’s perfect.

It’s also the start of a journey where we begin to discover who we really are. As a writer, and a mother, I felt that was a journey worth making.

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### **ABOUT THE PRODUCTION**

**Mortified** is a co-production between the Australian Children's Television Foundation and Enjoy Entertainment for the Nine Network Australia, BBC, Disney Australia, New Zealand and Asia.

The series investors are the Film Finance Corporation Australia, the Australian Children's Television Foundation, the Pacific Film and Television Commission, Digital Pictures and Film Victoria's Melbourne Film Office. The 26-part series was shot entirely on location on the Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia.

Executive Producer/Producer Phillip Bowman first met the creator of **Mortified**, writer Angela Webber, whilst developing another series when he was CEO of animation studio Energee Entertainment. He had brought a group of writers together to workshop ideas and Angela was one of those writers.

He was also looking, at the time, for a series which would appeal to 8–12 year olds and Angela gave him a one and a half page outline for **Mortified**, which she had originally conceived as an animation series

"Having worked with Angela, I could see straight away that even though **Mortified** was a work of fiction, essentially it was all about Angela's life and all about her children. It was what every producer is looking for, the heart of the writer on the page. Angela had been a gun for hire of some significance, but this was her opportunity to write her own series, her own story. For a producer that's gold, one is always looking for that truth, and when you've got truth you've got drama and when you've got drama you've potentially got comedy," Phillip says.

Phillip put together another writers' workshop, which contained many of Angela's friends from her Sydney University architecture review days, to further develop the ideas from her initial treatment and then took a completed first script and sample stories to the Nine Network. Nine's director of drama at that time Posie Graeme-Evans had always liked Angela's writing and loved the project. With Nine's interest aroused, Phillip brought **Mortified** to the Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF) for further development funding after which Enjoy and the ACTF entered a co-production arrangement to finance and co-produce the series.

The ACTF has, over the past 25 years, helped change the landscape of Australian children's television. In the early 1980s there was virtually no television drama made especially for Australian children. Acknowledged as one of the premier producers of high quality children's television drama in the world, the ACTF has carved a path into the international marketplace with its numerous series selling to over 100 countries.

Executive Producer/Producer for the ACTF, Bernadette O'Mahony, loved that first script.

"It was very clever and witty so the ACTF funded the development of another script and storylines for a series. Phillip, Angela and I worked at it together and could see the potential for a great series."

"**Mortified** is unusual for a number of reasons; it was a bit like a sitcom in lots of ways and it was unusual to have a show that's all from one character's point of view. That kind of series is difficult from a production perspective because of the restrictions on working with children. But with a daughter of my own who was 11 going on 12, the material rang very true to me."

"The ACTF was also interested from an educational perspective in that the series deals with issues which are relevant in education – the transition between primary and secondary school, friendships, self image, how people perceive your family versus how you perceive them. It had a heightened sense of the world and a heightened sense of humour, but was very grounded in the situations and feelings that kids would recognise."

"The concept had so much going for it. Once we had two well developed scripts and storylines, the ACTF took the project to the BBC who loved the scripts and immediately came onboard. With the BBC in place, we went back to Channel 9 who then formally committed to the series with a pre-sale, and we also secured an offer from Disney Channel."

Phillip recalls that a number of the writers - all with strong comedy backgrounds - but particularly development executive Paul Leedon and series creator Angela Webber, had often talked about creating the great Australian sitcom.

"When we started developing **Mortified**, *Malcolm in the Middle* was recently new on air and it became a bit of a guiding principle. We weren't trying to emulate it, but rather reference that wacky sense of humour. The fact of the matter is that **Mortified** is a sitcom about families, but told through the eyes of a child. Pino Amenta is, I suggest, the best comedy director in Australia, and he said the same. I'm sure that was part of the appeal for him," Phillip says.

Even before approaching the ACTF, the decision had been made to make it a live action series, rather than animation. However, a legacy of the animation concept is the fantasy/CGI elements, which are central to the character of Taylor.

"I suspect because I had been running an animation studio, the idea of having those tools available to me allowed me to think more expansively about using CGI elements," Phillip says.

The series was originally set in Coogee, on Sydney's beaches, where Angela Webber and her family live. But the production was eventually lured to

Queensland by the Pacific Film and Television Commission and their offer of production investment in the series.

Bernadette, Phillip and series director Pino Amenta are delighted with the results of the move. “Money was a big reason for re-locating the series but not the only reason to make the move,” Bernadette says. “Because it was set originally to be done on the Sydney beaches we had a look we wanted for the show and we couldn’t have got that anywhere close to Sydney. The Gold Coast gave us a look and feel for the show which was what we had in mind initially; which was a small community feel, but in reality, we got a lot more than the right look. It is much easier to shoot around Palm Beach and Currumbin than it ever would have been around Sydney and we had access to fantastic local crews. For the series it was a great move and has worked really well.”

Director Pino Amenta agrees: “I don’t think it would have worked as well in a big city. It feels like we’re in a small town and with the high rises of Surfers Paradise in the distance, it almost has a yellow brick road kind of feel. The kids in the series are near a city but not part of it. And visually it is vast and open.”

Pino wanted to direct the series as soon as he read the scripts: “I could see the show being something special – essentially it is a show about a girl who is mortified about her parents but Angela did such a great job in writing the dialogue and the characters that I saw the potential, not so much the situation but in the characters.

“The cast is one of the best I’ve ever worked with. I hate buffoonery, I like to keep it pretty sharp. To me the comedy is a rhythm thing and once the actors get the rhythm they’re fine. You don’t have to pull faces to be funny. There’s a lot of gutsy irony in this series and I think kids are smart, they adore that ironic comedy.”

Pino has huge praise for his young star, 12 year old Marny Kennedy. She is in virtually every scene in the series and also had to maintain her school work. “She’s terrific. She can act with real subtlety and I hardly had to tell her what to do. She’s got great instincts, particularly for someone so young.”

Bernadette O’Mahony says another strength of the series is that it doesn’t talk down to children, and while the primary audience will be 8–12 year olds, it will also play older.

“It addresses themes the older audience have had to live through. And anyone with an older sibling will relate to Layla; she’s the rebellious teenager who gets all the attention. I thought Angela was really clever the way she tapped into that age group as well.”

Pino Amenta was first choice for series director. Other directors across the 26 episodes are Paul Moloney, Ian Gilmour and Queenslanders Evan Clarry and Michael Pattinson. Writers on the series are Angela Webber, Sam Carroll,

Steve Wright, Tim Gooding, Jo Pigott, Max Dann, Shirley Pierce, Helen MacWhirter, Chris Anastasiades and Adam Bowen.

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### **THE CHARACTERS**

#### **TAYLOR FRY (11/12)**

Even though Taylor is smart, spirited and funny, she feels invisible amongst her noisy and chaotic family. It isn't that Taylor's the quiet one - quite the opposite. Like the rest of the Frys, Taylor is exuberant, articulate and not afraid to venture her opinion. It's just that the rest of the family are endlessly preoccupied. From where Taylor is standing, she believes she doesn't get a look in. How could she? There's no space. The way she sees it, Don and Glenda are totally preoccupied with work, Layla, and each other, while Layla is totally absorbed in herself, her romances...and her turbulent teenage hormones.

When Taylor feels invisible, she frequently resorts to living inside her head. It's pretty interesting in there. She has a brilliant imagination. She daydreams. She fantasises about herself in glittering situations. Inanimate objects come to life and debate with her. A statue or a turtle might reveal a common bond....

Like the rest of her family, Taylor's prone to sudden enthusiasms. When she's swept up by an idea, stand back. She's a pre-teen juggernaut. She's got the courage to give most things a go. Taylor's happy to front up at an office to try to change her name by deed poll, or go to World Vision and register herself for overseas adoption. Not a lot fazes her. Her idiosyncratic take on the world and her gutsy nature are what make her stand out from the rest of the Primary School pack.

Taylor always tries to see the best in people and situations (with the possible exception of Layla who stretches her patience to its elastic limit). She's fascinated by the seemingly perfect lives of the Flune family next door and wishes that her own rowdy, but loving family was more like them. She's also very keen on her good-looking, alpha-male classmate, Leon Lipowski. Leon's embarrassment about his own family resonates deeply with Taylor.

When it comes to the future, Taylor's determined to make a difference. She's intuitive – but even if her instincts are good, her analysis can be way off the mark. With the best will in the world, the bottom line is she's 11 years old - she gets things wrong.

Taylor is also highly impressionable. Tell her the aliens are coming and she'll be out on the street waiting for them. Tell her special, overseas children are selected as high-level lamas, she's certain it must be her. On one level she suspects Mystic Marj is a crackpot, but can't help remaining gullible. It's very, very easy for Taylor to get carried away... which often leads to trouble.

But In times of need, there's always one person she turns to. Her kind, loyal and quietly adoring best friend.....

## **HECTOR (11/12)**

If Taylor's approach to life is right-brained, Hector's is left-brained. He's everything Taylor isn't – sceptical, rational and well-balanced. He's the logical stalwart in Taylor's illogical world.

Taylor is Hector's best friend. Well, more accurately, his only friend. Because he's bright, other kids at Sunburn Public think he's nerdy, with the possible exception of Brittany who is prepared to put up with him from time to time. Though Hector and Taylor argue and spat like an old married couple, in reality, they couldn't live without each other. In a way, they are both outsiders - it's the two of them against the rest of the playground.

On occasions Hector despairs about Taylor's flights of fantasy, but her spirit takes his breath away. She surprises and delights him. He hangs on her every word. Sometimes he's her conscience, sometimes her protector, frequently he's her fall guy. Life with Taylor is never boring, but then again neither is visiting her family in Sunburn Avenue. Being an only child of a single mum who works shiftwork, Hector relishes the boisterous Fry household. He loves hanging out there a lot.

There's a very romantic side to Hector, not that he'd ever let on to Taylor. Though he's not the sort of boy to have many fantasies, when he does, they all involve settling down and marrying Taylor. She has absolutely no idea of his feelings towards her. She's too fixated on her crush on Leon. Hector just tolerates Leon... he's his absolute antithesis.

But Hector will wait for Taylor... forever if necessary. In his steadfast, pre-teen mind she is now, and will always be, the love of his life.

## **BRITTANY (11/12)**

Brittany Flune is a princess and she lives next door to the Frys. Brittany is indulged and opinionated and very used to getting her own way. She's the only child of privileged parents who have invested their aspirations in her. She's well groomed, learns the "social" sport of tennis, she studies ballet, she learns piano. Michael and Loretta have big plans for Brittany's future.

While everything in Brittany's world seems idyllic, the view from the inside isn't quite so perfect. For a start, she's lonely, and though her parents appear utterly devoted to her, they are actually seriously controlling. As she approaches her teenage years, it's starting to rankle. She's also aware that things aren't ideal between her parents. Their house is a showpiece, but it's a tense, spookily clean household.

Sometimes Brittany finds herself looking longingly over the fence at the Fry house. It might be messy and run-down, but it's a household full of laughter and spontaneous displays of affection.

Like Taylor, Brittany has a crush on...

## **LEON (11/12)**

Leon Lipowski might be mad, bad and dangerous to know, but he's startlingly good-looking and totally charismatic. He rules the playground at Sunburn Public. Like his older siblings, Leon is outstanding at sport. Leon is a champion runner and soccer player and recently he's taken up surfing. He's brilliant at that too. He's intelligent, but rarely bothers to apply himself in the classroom. He's got a rebellious streak.

But for all the positives going on in his life, Leon's life has one major drawback. His Dad has a shaky relationship with the law. Leon's humiliated by the way his father "goes away" from time to time... and he's vowed he's never going to get himself in the same situation.

Leon's vaguely aware he's idolised by both girls and boys – but it's not something he dwells on. There's way too much else that's exciting going on in his life. He thinks Brittany is pretty, but tires of her because she's spoiled and precious. He's occasionally impressed by Taylor's feistiness. Because Hector shows no sporting prowess whatsoever, he barely registers a blip on Leon's radar.

### **DON FRY (Suddenly 40)**

Don is exuberant, uninhibited and a doting family man. He adores his family; Glenda, Layla and Taylor. They are the centre of his world. He loves Sunburn Beach as well, and never plans to leave. After years as a keen surfer, he's recently "lived his dream" and requalified as a life-saver. With the sun shining and his best girls by his side, Don is quintessentially a contented man.

Don grew up in Sunburn Beach and inherited a rundown house and a struggling menswear business from his parents. But Don's a creative thinker. He likes to "think outside the square" - it's just that a few of his schemes are a little unconventional. He's re-badged the shop and pushed in the direction of a niche market. Undergarments. To the humiliation of both his daughters he's named the shop "The Underpant King"... a soubriquet he's proud to have.

The only dark spots in Don's life are the uncertain nature of the retail industry and the tempestuous behaviour of his older daughter, Layla. But with Glenda by his side, he's confident Layla will turn out right in the end... it's just that the years getting there could be a bit trying.

### **GLEND A FRY (Suddenly 40)**

Like Don, Glenda is expressive, exuberant, given to fleeting enthusiasms. She's a local girl as well, although she did spend a few years in the Byron Bay region as a younger woman. Those freewheeling years in a sarong gave Glenda a taste for all things a little bit New Age. She's committed to massage and Feng Shui and the peculiar psychic predictions of her cousin, Mystic Marj.

Glenda adores Don and the girls. She's openly affectionate with them and believes in publicly workshopping her feelings – much to the embarrassment of both her daughters. Like Taylor, Glenda can be quite feisty. If she believes in a cause, she's willing to fight for it. But like Don, her methods can be quite unorthodox.

Glenda's also a big believer in education. She's got a whole wall of framed certificates from TAFE courses to prove it. She loves art and frequently explores her creative side through sculpture, painting and craft. She's a bit of a show off – hence her ability to spruik in shopping centres. But Glenda's too much of a free spirit to be tied down to one job... she's a Jill of all trades... and, sadly, a master of none.

The biggest issue in Glenda's life at the moment is how to manage...

## **LAYLA FRY (16 going on 30)**

Layla's first word was "me", and since then not a lot has changed. She's beautiful, cool, precocious and as manipulative as hell. She's also at the mercy of hormones, which isn't pleasant for the rest of the family to be around. She's got a quick temper which flares at unexpected moments – especially when she doesn't get her own way. Layla's the sort of person that can suck the oxygen out of a room and it really gets on Taylor's nerves.

School work is not high on Layla's agenda... but boys are. Sometimes Layla dreams of escaping school to become a model, or a nail artist, or a flight attendant, or a spring bride. But so far Glenda and Don have successfully managed to derail her plans.

The thing is, Layla's a babe magnet. Boys flock to her... the good, the bad and the totally gormless. But she's a serial dumper who leaves a trail of adolescent heartbreak in her wake.

Layla dismisses Taylor as a nuisance and continually looks for ways to exploit her good nature. Taylor regards Layla as a pain in the neck.

## **MYSTIC MARJ**

Mystic Marj is Glenda's cousin who happens to live in Sunburn Beach. Well past the first bloom of youth, she's an earthy woman who some people (i.e. sceptics like Hector) might call a charlatan.

Marj used to work at the TAB but, after watching a program on psychics on Cable TV, she decided she had the second sight. Anyway, the pay was better. Don's not 100% convinced she's right about the psychic stuff, but Glenda is. Totally. When she sits down and does the tarot, Taylor's pretty convinced as well... she just wishes Marj wouldn't get her to do all her odd jobs... like buying cappuccinos and picking up the dry cleaning.

Mystic Marj has a gypsy wagon cum tarot stall down at the mall, but when business is slow she'll pop in to visit Don or Glenda. She's a frequent visitor to the house and often makes dire predictions for all the family.

Apart from tarot reading, Mystic Marj earns a few extra bucks on the side as a marriage celebrant. She, herself, was married years ago, but it didn't end well. These days she lives with two morbidly obese cats – Merlin and Bo Bo – although she is predicting a heady romance for herself soon...

## **MR MC CLUSKY**

Mr McCluskey has been a Primary School teacher for over 30 years. He's committed to his work. Absolutely nothing surprises him – from pupils, parents and the rest of the staff. His manner is warm, his humour wry. In spite of the gravy stains on his cardigan, he's a lot more clued in than people realise... particularly when it comes to the psychology of your average, suburban 11 year old.

In an unstated way, the students of 6M are devoted to Mr McCluskey. He is one of the few people to comprehend that his student, Taylor Fry, is a very unusual child.

## **MORTIFIED**

### **THE CAST**

#### **MARNY KENNEDY as TAYLOR**

Marny Kennedy, who turned 12 during the making of **Mortified**, has wanted to be a professional actor ever since she can remember. She has been studying acting since she was six although she began as a two year old telling her parents that she wanted to be on television. She's always dreamed of walking down the red carpet as the star of a show.

**Mortified** is Marny's first major role and meant Marny had to leave her home and school in Melbourne for six months and move to the Gold Coast where the series was filmed.

"It was the longest and best six months of my life. Time and everything else feels quite different on a set. At the beginning people told me that once the show finished it would be like losing my family. I didn't think I could be that close to so many people but it is true, every single person in the show is like family to me."

Marny had an astonishing work load for a 12 year old but she coped with a grace that belies her years. As well as being in virtually every scene throughout the series, she had to keep up with her school work with daily tutoring.

Marny describes her character Taylor: "She has wild, crazy ideas and even though she is certain that they will turn out right, they never do because they're so wacky. She's 'out there'....and she's often mortified, particularly by her parents. She's self conscious about what others think of her and her family; she's very protective of her reputation."

"As we go through the series Taylor matures and relaxes. She notices that everyone she is trying to impress around her is embarrassed as much as she is; she accepts that her parents aren't going to change because they're great people just the way they are."

## **NICOLAS DUNN as HECTOR**

Nicolas Dunn's father was a drama teacher in his home city of Brisbane. He's been going to drama school every since he was a small boy and has always wanted to perform comedy, like his cinema hero Jim Carrey.

Previously, Nicolas had a small role in the mini-series about the Lindy Chamberlain trial, *Through My Eyes*.

"Being one of the lead characters is a little less glamorous than I thought it would be but it has been lots of fun. The long hours were hard for the first week but then you get used to it and you realise how much school work you can get through when you're working with a tutor," Nicolas says.

Nicolas says he and Hector have many characteristics in common, "but I'm not as smart as Hector," he laughs. "Hector is deeply in love with Taylor but she doesn't recognise it, she likes Leon. He thinks he's completely misunderstood."

## **MAIA McCALL MITCHELL as BRITTANY**

Maia is from Lismore in northern New South Wales. Her first experience at acting was in her kindergarten year in her school play.

"After the play I was backstage crying, my mum asked me why I was upset and it was because it was a whole year before I could get on stage again, so she put me into classes and I have been acting ever since," Maia says.

Maia has had one role in a short film before being cast in **Mortified**.

"It has been an amazing experience, every day you learn so many new things," she says.

Maia describes her character Brittany, who is Taylor's next door neighbour: "She is very posh, self obsessed and all the time thinking about how she looks. Brittany comes from a very rich family and I think in the beginning Taylor envies Brittany and wants to be like her - she sees Brittany's life as absolutely perfect - but actually Brittany feels a bit intimidated by her family and she feels like she doesn't quite fit in."

"At the beginning Taylor and Brittany have a kind of love/hate relationship, they are friends but they don't really 'get' each other. Then Brittany starts to be intrigued by Taylor's family and they get to know each other better and become really good friends."

## **LUKE ERCEG as LEON**

Luke Erceg is from Sydney. He did some acting when he was very little and then two years ago enrolled in a one week summer course at the National Institute of Dramatic Art. During the course he was asked to audition for *The December Boys*, a major new feature film featuring *Harry Potter* star Daniel Radcliffe, but was too young for the role. Inspired by the experience, Luke found an agent and soon after was asked to audition for **Mortified**.

Luke's character Leon is the cool guy in school, the one all the girls, including Taylor, swoon over: "Luke pretends to be dumb in class, but he's not as dumb as he makes out. He just thinks it isn't cool to be intelligent. He surfs, skateboards, plays soccer and does cross country running. I had to learn to surf for the role, and I loved it, so now I want a mini mal so that me and my Dad can go surfing together," Luke says.

## **DAJANA CAHILL as LAYLA**

**Mortified** is Dajana Cahill's first role as a professional actress. She was discovered by the production through her acting school in Brisbane. She shares, she says, many traits in common with her 16 year old character, Taylor's older sister Layla.

"Layla is the nasty older sister. She's a typical 16 year old girl, breaking away from her family and being rebellious. Layla is at times pretty mortified by her parents as well as Taylor but she's learned to deal with it by breaking away from them. If she's at home, which isn't often, she's usually fighting, most often with her Mum," Dajana says.

"I'm the same age as Layla so of course I fight with my Mum too and I can totally understand her. At home I'm the nasty older sister to two younger brothers," she laughs.

## ANDREW BLACKMAN as DON

A graduate of the National Institute of Dramatic Art, Andrew Blackman became well known to Australian television viewers for his long running role as Dr Harry Morrison in *A Country Practice*. He has had numerous television roles since in series including *Law of the Land*, *Halifax f.p.*, *Mercury*, *Blue Heelers*, *State Coroner*, *Neighbours*, *Stingers* and the Australian Children's Television Foundation series *Crash Zone* and *Legacy of the Silver Shadow*. Andrew runs his own theatre company which performs in schools around Australia.

He says working on **Mortified** has been a great experience: "It is one of those dream jobs as an actor – it's a lovely cast, a lovely crew, the stories are really well written, the situation comedy plays itself and Don is a lot of fun to play. He gives me carte blanche as an actor to go nuts!

"I run a company which puts on productions in high schools in Victoria and that's hard work. So, from directing *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*, the big heavy tragedies of the world, and then being asked to come up to the Gold Coast to be a part of **Mortified** has been an absolute delight."

Unlike many drama programs for children, the adult characters in **Mortified** are more than the stereotypical mum and dad, Andrew says: "Although the series centres around the character of Taylor and her problems which she needs to work through in each episode, the parents feature quite a bit and we're not the archetypal mum or the archetypal dad. Mum's a bit of a hippy, dad's a surfer who runs his own business. He's the underpant king of Sunburn Beach and drives around in an old van with homemade fluorescent sign... so he is a huge embarrassment to his daughters."

Other kids, of course, tell Taylor that her parents are really cool... and usually by the end of each episode she realises that they are worth loving and that they love her dearly.

"In this day and age where profit is king, this is a family that can find happiness in the smallest of things. I'm sure it helps that they live right at the beach, but they're in an old shack and don't feel the need to keep up with the Jones' or the Flunes'. They don't want to knock down their house and put up a mansion in its place," Andrew says.

## **RACHEL BLAKELY as GLENDA**

Rachel Blakely's television career includes a leading role in the three series of the international production *The Lost World*, roles in other international productions including *Tale of the South Seas*, *Xena: Warrior Princess* and *Tribe*, and in the Australian series *Neighbours*, *Blue Heelers* and *One Way Ticket*. She featured in the telemovie *Attack on the Queen* and has also made several films in Australia and Europe.

Rachel first moved to Queensland for her role in *The Lost World*, fell in love and never left.

Until now, she has most often played the 'bad girl' so had a ball playing Glenda: "Glenda is emotionally a bit free wheeling; she is kind of a bit all over the shop but when it comes to her family she's very centred and together. They really truly are the most important thing in her life. She's never really found anything else. She does lots of different things – jobs and hobbies – but is one of those women whose husband and children are everything to her, she says.

"I love the fact that she and Don are so in love after all of these years, they still hold hands and kiss and, rightly so, that's mortifying for any 12 year old."

Some of Glenda's escapades include taking up spray on tanning for a living with some disastrous results. She's a masseuse for a while, she dons koala suits to collect money for charity, and is always running around putting up fliers for another cause about which she is passionate – again embarrassing her children.

"As a child I would be totally mortified if I had a mother like Glenda – for kids, anything out of the mould is embarrassing! But there is a great message in Glenda – she just enjoys being herself."

## STEVEN TANDY as MR MCCLUSKEY

Steven Tandy was one of the best known faces on Australian television from 1976–1982 as Tom Sullivan in the much loved seminal Australian series *The Sullivans*. His other television appearances include *All the Rivers Run*, *Rafferty's Rules*, *Spyforce*, *Sons and Daughters*, *Paradise Peach*, *Pacific Drive* and *Earthwatch*. Steven is a regular on the stage in Queensland and New South Wales and his recent feature film credits include *Gettin' Square* and *Rough Diamonds*.

“Mr McCluskey is a warm, approachable and kind teacher whom the students respect and listen to. His influence is genuinely positive and reassuring and not at all intimidating. With Taylor, there seems to be a special empathy, as he is able to sympathetically coax her into sharing her private thoughts and fantasies. As a mentor to young minds, he is encouraging and positive and held in high esteem,” Steven says.

“The scripts were novel and interesting and gave me an insight into communication methods employed by teachers. Mr McCluskey was a delightful character to play, with his quiet authority, wry humour and empathy. I'd always wanted to play a 'Mr Chips' type character such as this.”

Steven loved the opportunity to work with directors Pino Amenta and Paul Moloney, old friends who directed him on *The Sullivans*, and to work on the Gold Coast which has been home to his parents for 30 years.

“Making a series in such a wonderful part of Queensland is an exhilarating experience. The climate was superb, locations picturesque and the possibilities seem quite endless. I think **Mortified** will show off a unique vista of scenery with its beautiful coastline and beaches. The air is clean and fresh and the crew were remarkably talented and professional. All in all, it was one of the most happy experiences of my acting career.

## **SALLY MCKENZIE as MYSTIC MARJ**

Sally McKenzie is an actor, writer and director. She is a regular performer with the Queensland Theatre Company and La Boite Theatre in Brisbane and has directed her own plays also for La Boite. Her screen credits include *The Leaving of Liverpool*, *The Flying Doctors*, *A Country Practice*, *Mother and Son* and *Rafferty's Rules*.

Mystic Marj has been part of the Fry family for years; she's Glenda's cousin and whilst she doesn't live with them, always seems to be hanging around with some scheme or other. A reader of tea leaves and tarot cards and able to predict the future, Marj is also a marriage celebrant. She married Don and Glenda many years ago and also officiated at the ceremony when they renewed their vows.

"Mystic Marj is a bit of a character. She drives a moke and has rather strange looking outfits, mostly with lots of leopard skin. And she has two cats. She carries a lot of the comedy in the series but like all good comedy you can't play it for gags, you've got to find the truth behind it," Sally says.

## PETER KENT as MICHAEL FLUNE

Peter Kent featured in the *Beastmaster* series filmed in Queensland and also acted as American accent coach for the entire Australian cast. He also featured in *Time Trax*, *Paradise Beach*, *Medivac* and *Flipper (II and III)*. Peter's film credits include *Crocodile Dundee in LA*, *Joey*, *Blackwater Trial* and *Little White Lies*.

In **Mortified** he plays Michael Flune, husband of Loretta, father of Brittany, and next door neighbour to the Fry family.

"The Flunes are a very accomplished family through the strict guidance of Loretta. Michael does everything she wants him to. He does have pockets of resistance and every now and then will snap at Loretta... but he doesn't like to leave her angry and always ends a snap with a kiss," Peter says.

"Michael gets along very well with Glenda and Don next door but he has to hide it from Loretta. He's not quite the snob that Loretta is. Being a lawyer he's seen lots of different things in life, but his wife is very much into acquisition... bigger house, more cars, better, better, better... onwards and upwards is her favourite saying.

"I relate to it very much as I was raised by worldly people who didn't have a lot of money so we were always struggling."

Michael supports Brittany's friendship with Taylor, even though Loretta thinks the Frys aren't good enough to associate with: "Taylor is a much more grounded kid. Even though she lives in a fantasy world she is a good influence on Brittany... unlike Loretta who has taught her that she's better than other people. The family might have a stronger sense of decorum than some people but we certainly don't have as much fun."

As Michael, Peter has had to learn the tango and fake classical piano and cello playing – all as part of Loretta's relentless pursuit of perfection for her family.

"The writing on this show is second to none. They're an entertaining read and it is beautifully layered. It's nice to poke gentle fun at people who like to have two BMW's in the driveway and always dress beautifully. It seems our society has become addicted to the idea of acquisition and one of the lovely messages from **Mortified** is that money and possessions don't necessarily make you happy."

## **VERONICA NEAVE as LORETTA FLUNE**

Veronica Neave trained with the Flying Fruitfly Circus and has had a significant career in physical theatre for the Circus and Legs on the Wall. She has won the Robert Helpman Award for her production *Same Same But Different*, the Matilda Award for Excellence in Theatre and The John Harris Critics Award for Contribution to Queensland Theatre. Veronica has appeared in dozens of theatre productions including for the Sydney Theatre Company, the Melbourne Theatre Company, La Boite and the Royal Queensland Theatre Company. She appeared in the acclaimed Australian film *The Boys* and on television in the mini series *Through My Eyes* and *Changi* and the series *Wildside*, *Medivac*, *Big Sky* and *GP*.

Veronica, hilariously, plays against type to transform herself into the Frys snobbish neighbour Loretta Flune.

“We live next door to each other but we are from opposite ends of the spectrum. Loretta is very uptight, a perfectionist and needs everything to be the latest, the best and she only wants the best for her daughter in every possible way. That creates a nice contrast to the Frys who are very free for all and happy go lucky. It is a bit unfortunate for the Flunes to be residing next door to the Frys; and at one stage they do try to move,” Veronica says.

“We come to understand that the Flunes look like they have it all but they really don’t. They have a façade which makes everything look good but it is at great cost to their personal lives. As a result they do come undone as a family several times and they don’t really stack up against the Frys.”

Veronica notes that one of the delights of working on a children’s series, apart from the fun of exploiting Loretta’s insecurities, is the happy atmosphere on set.

“Because we’re working with children, everybody makes an effort to keep up and bright and that’s infectious, it’s a really nice way to work.”

## **MORTIFIED**

### **THE CREATIVE TEAM**

#### **CREATOR AND WRITER**

#### **ANGELA WEBBER**

After completing a degree in Architecture, Angela Webber embarked on a successful writing career. She began writing sketches for *The Garry McDonald Show* which led to three years writing and performing with Jonathon Coleman on 2JJJFM's comedy program *Off the Record*.

For several years Angela continued to work on radio, becoming a member of *The Jay Team* (2JJJFM's breakfast program) and with Adam Bowen she co-authored the hugely popular ABC series *Brunswick Heads Revisited*. She was an early contributor to *This Sporting Life with Roy and HG*, and also wrote and performed comedy for 2BL, 2SM and SA FM. In 1995 Angela presented the afternoon shift on ABC Radio 2BL.

Angela was commissioned to write material for Pamela Stephenson (*Not the Papal Tour*), Dave Allen, and for numerous television events such as *The People's Choice Awards*. She appeared regularly on *The Midday Show* with Ray Martin and contributed comedy to programs including *Tonight Live with Steve Vizard*, *The Eleventh Hour*, *The Gerry Connolly Show* and *O'Loughlin on Saturday Night*.

Angela has written episodes for the children's television series *Hi-5*, *Petals*, *Swinging*, *Driven Crazy*, *Pig's Breakfast* and also contributed to *Sesame Street*.

With journalist and broadcaster Richard Glover, she has co-written two books, *The Joy of Blokes* and *The P-Plate Parent*, and has contributed regularly as a feature writer and columnist to Australian magazines and newspapers.

Angela lives by the sea in Sydney with her husband and young daughters Lily and Sally and their dog Splash.

## EXECUTIVE PRODUCER/PRODUCER

## PHILLIP BOWMAN

Phillip Bowman began his career at the ABC in Australia where he worked as an Assistant Director in TV Drama on several series including *Certain Woman*, *Pig in a Poke* and *The Outsider*. He moved to England in 1977 joining BBC TV Drama where he first worked as an Assistant Director and then as Production Manager on various series including *Shoestring* and *Bergerac*. Phillip came back to Australia in 1981 and directed, for the Grundy Organisation, series including *Sons and Daughters* and *Waterloo Station*. He returned to England two years later at the invitation of Euston Films as Associate Producer/Director of the hit series *Minder* and later as Producer on ITV's top rating drama serial *Crossroads*.

Phillip produced the mini-series *Hard Cases* for Central Television and in 1988 joined Mersey Television, the producers of *Brookside*, as Head of Production and Creative Development. He oversaw all aspects of the production of *Brookside* and conceived and initiated new programming for all British networks, including the drama series *Waterfront Beat* which was produced for BBC 1.

Returning to Australia in 1990, Phillip settled in Brisbane and established Henderson Bowman Productions with writer Kate Henderson. With a burgeoning interest in children's drama and animation, the company developed and produced the 26-part, award-winning pre-school animation series *Lizzie's Library* for ABC TV's Children and Education Department. This was followed by another 26-part stop motion series, *Kitu and Woofl*, also produced for the ABC. Phillip also co-created and Executive Produced the TV movie *Flying Foxx*.

He joined Energee Entertainment in June 2001 as Chief Executive Officer, managing all aspects of the Energee studios in Sydney for German parent company RTV until they closed the studio at the end of 2002.

Returning to independent production, Phillip developed the children's drama series **Mortified** and he has also continued to develop the children's classic animation series *The Muddle Headed Wombat* based on the Ruth Park title of the same name and a new CGI series *Mikey Mechanic*. He has several other film and television projects in development.

Phillip is a former Chapter Head (Queensland) for SPAA, Adjunct Professor in the School of Media and Journalism at the Queensland University of Technology and a member of the board of the Brisbane Montessori School.

## EXECUTIVE PRODUCER/PRODUCER

## BERNADETTE O'MAHONY

After more than 20 years in the freelance industry, Bernadette O'Mahony is currently the Head of Development and Production at the Australian Children's Television Foundation where she oversees all projects that the ACTF develops, produces, invests in and distributes.

Bernadette joined the ACTF in 1997 when she Line Produced the series *Crash Zone* for the ACTF and the Disney Channels. Since then she has been a producer on ACTF series including *Round the Twist 3* (ABC), *Crash Zone 2* (Channel 7/Disney) and *Legacy of the Silver Shadow* (Network 10). She also oversaw the production of the fourth *Round the Twist* series whilst she was off having her second baby.

Prior to joining the ACTF, Bernadette has a long list of credits as an Associate Producer, Line Producer and Production Manager on feature films, telemovies, mini-series and television series. Her credits include the features *Crackers*, *Spotswood*, *True Love and Chaos*, *Blackfellas* and *Blood Oath*; the mini-series *Stark* and *All The Rivers Run II*; and television series including *Good Guys Bad Guys*, *Banjo Paterson's Man From Snowy River*, *Adventures of the Bush Patrol* and *Lift Off* just to name a few.

Bernadette has also worked as a budget analyst for the Australian Film Commission, and she has and does sit on a number of industry and government committees in relation to the film and television industry including the committee advising the Victorian Government on child employment in film and television, being an assessor for the Commonwealth Government's Film Tax Offset Scheme and a member of the SPAA Children's Television Sub-Committee.

Bernadette regularly lectures to film and television and screenwriting students on writing for and working in children's television and film.

Being able to finance, develop and bring **Mortified** to life over the past couple of years has been a joy for Bernadette – working with Angela Webber and seeing her vision become a reality has been a great reward for all the hard work everyone has put into this wonderful series.

## **SERIES DIRECTOR**

## **PINO AMENTA**

Pino Amenta is one of Australia's most experienced television directors. His first credit was on the iconic Australian series *The Sullivans* in 1976 and since then he has worked on numerous series, mini series and television movies. In the 1970s and 1980s those programs included *Acropolis Now*, *Nancy Wake*, *Sword of Honour*, *The Flying Doctors*, *Anzacs*, *All the Rivers Run*, *Taurus Rising*, *Bellamy*, *Chopper Squad* and *Young Ramsay*.

Through the next decade Pino worked on local and international series including *Farscape*, *All Saints*, *Round the Twist*, *Good Guys Bad Guys* and *Blue Heelers*, and more recently his credits have included the ACTF/BBC series *Noah & Saskia*, *Last Man Standing*, *Crash Palace* and *Always Greener*.

## **THE AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S TELEVISION FOUNDATION**

The Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF) is a national non-profit organisation committed to providing Australian children with entertaining and innovative media made especially for them, which makes an enduring contribution to their cultural and developmental experience.

The ACTF has been operating for nearly 25 years. Over that time, it has helped change the landscape of Australian children's television. In the early 1980s there was virtually no television drama made especially for Australian children and the ACTF has helped change that. The ACTF has carved a path into the international marketplace with its series selling to over 100 countries and the ACTF being acknowledged as one of the world's premier producers of high quality children's television drama.

The ACTF is renowned for its high quality productions including the television hits *Round the Twist* and *Crash Zone* and the acclaimed feature film *Yolngu Boy*.

The ACTF has now produced over 180 hours of children's drama and documentaries including *Noah & Saskia*, *Round the Twist*, *Crash Zone*, *Legacy of the Silver Shadow*, *The Genie From Down Under*, *Lift Off*, *Li'l Elvis Jones & The Truckstoppers*, *Sky Trackers*, *Songs of Innocence*, *Touch the Sun*, *Winners* and *More Winners* and *Yolngu Boy*.

## **KEY CAST**

**Taylor**

**Marny Kennedy**

**Hector**

**Nicolas Dunn**

**Brittany**

**Maia McCall Mitchell**

**Layla**

**Dajana Cahill**

**Don**

**Andrew Blackman**

**Glenda**

**Rachel Blakely**

**Leon**

**Luke Erceg**

**Mr McCluskey**

**Steven Tandy**

**Mystic Marj**

**Sally McKenzie**

**Michael Flune**

**Peter Kent**

**Loretta Flune**

**Veronica Neave**

## **KEY CREW**

<b>Executive Producer/Producer</b>	<b>Phillip Bowman</b>
<b>Executive Producer</b>	<b>Jenny Buckland</b>
<b>Executive Producer/Producer</b>	<b>Bernadette O'Mahony</b>
<b>Creator/Writer</b>	<b>Angela Webber</b>
<b>Script Editor/Writer</b>	<b>Sam Carroll Steve Wright</b>
<b>Writers</b>	<b>Tim Gooding Jo Pigott Max Dann Shirley Pierce Helen MacWhirter Chris Anastassiades Adam Bowen</b>
<b>Series Director</b>	<b>Pino Amenta</b>
<b>Directors</b>	<b>Paul Moloney Evan Clarry Ian Gilmour Michael Pattinson</b>
<b>Line Producer</b>	<b>Stottie</b>
<b>Production Designer</b>	<b>Georgina Greenhill</b>
<b>Art Director</b>	<b>Ken James</b>
<b>DOP</b>	<b>Henry Pierce Craig Barden</b>
<b>Costume Designer</b>	<b>Jason Gibald</b>
<b>Key Makeup/Hair</b>	<b>Tess Natoli</b>
<b>Visual Effects Supervisor</b>	<b>Dennis Way Nicholson</b>