



Prisoners put on play behind bars

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WHILE countless mouths have uttered the immortal words, few have done so rehearsing in standard prison garb.

The cast of about 20 Borallon Correctional Centre inmates were in final rehearsals yesterday for their Shakespeare production, *Julius Caesar*.

The maximum security prisoners will perform the play today to Borallon staff, prisoners and invited guests as part of an education program run by the Queensland Shakespeare Ensemble.

The program is led by artistic director and University of Queensland lecturer Dr Rob

Pensalfini and is only the second time Australian prisoners have staged a Shakespearean play.

"In 2006 *The Tempest's* themes of incarceration, isolation and loss of privilege and freedom were recognised as important and relevant from the prisoners' perspectives," Dr Pensalfini said.

"With *Julius Caesar*, the discussion of the use and misuse of power, betrayal, loyalty and violence has proved pertinent."

Borallon Correctional Centre Offender Throughcare manager Mary McKenzie said the performance was an effective way to develop prisoners' social skills and help with their rehabilitation

"A lot of them don't have much education on the outside," Ms McKenzie said.

"This gives them a taste of the English language and hopefully leads them to seek further education on the outside or even start doing that here and upon their release not get back into crime.

"That is the hope."

Ms McKenzie said she had noticed changes in the inmates' behaviour since they started rehearsals in February.

"I have seen improvements in their self-confidence and they seem less aggressive," she said.



FULL OF DRAMA: Dr Rob Pensalfini from the Queensland Shakespeare Ensemble explores the themes of the play with prisoners from Borallon Correctional Centre.

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