



Bard behind bars in bid to beat violence

By DANIEL VOYSEY

IT'S the Bard to the rescue as prisoners play out Shakespeare to learn to control their emotions in a radical rehabilitation project.

A new pilot program allowing high security prison inmates to learn and perform Shakespeare's plays such as *Richard III*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *Henry V* starts in Queensland next month.

Project co-ordinator Rob Pensalfini of the University of Queensland believes

Shakespeare's themes get performers to explore "the most complex of emotions".

"*Richard III* is great for a release of anger when there is a sense of unfairness," he said. "*Hamlet* is great in times of depression."

Dr Pensalfini admitted it was a stretch to say acting out Hamlet's

"To be or not to be" or Richard III's "My kingdom for a horse" speeches would lead to instant rehabilitation, but he hoped the program would offer prisoners new ways to resolve their problems. "Violence begins when words run out," he said.

The four-month program will give 12 young inmates from Borallon Correctional Centre in Queensland the opportunity to learn and perform passages of their choice.

This is the first such program in Australia and could come to NSW.

It follows a successful program at New York State's notorious Sing Sing prison which found long-term involvement in theatre improved prisoners' behaviour.