

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person  
**Entry ID:** AWE4719

## Howarde, Kate

(1864 - 1939)

<b>Born</b>	28 July, 1864, London England
<b>Died</b>	18 February, 1939, Kensington Sydney New South Wales Australia
<b>Occupation</b>	Actor, Director, Producer, Scriptwriter, Theatrical director

### Summary

Kate Howarde, born Catherine Clarissa Jones in England and migrating to New Zealand as a child, was the first woman to direct a feature film in Australia.

She married the musician William Henry de Saxe in April 1884 and their only child, Florence Adrienne, was born not long after on 5 December 1884. William Henry de Saxe left soon after Florence was born and died c.1899.

Catherine de Saxe adopted the stage name Kate Howarde in the 1890s. By the late 1890s, her theatre production company, the Kate Howarde Company was based in Australia and was reported to be extensively touring through New Zealand and all Australian States. In addition to managing the tours, Howarde controlled all finances, wrote and directed many of the performances, songs and pantomimes and performed herself.

Her biggest success was the comedy *Possum Paddock* (1919). Written, produced and presented by Howarde, the play told the story of the financial and romantic problems of a bush family. The success of the play convinced Howarde to turn the play into a film which she starred in, produced, co-scripted and co-directed with Charles Villiers. This made her the first woman in Australia to direct a feature film. Australian censors removed a scene from the film in which an unmarried mother imagines drowning her baby. The film was released in Sydney on 29 January 1921 and was well received throughout Australia and New Zealand.

## Details

The Kate Howarde Company included Kate's two younger brothers and one of her two sisters. Her brother Billie Howarde and brother-in-law Harry Craig ran the company when she travelled overseas.

Howarde travelled to San Francisco in 1906 and made a living writing theatre reviews for newspapers. She then travelled to London, where, it is reported, she married her second husband, vaudevillian Elton Black.

Between 1914 and 1917, the Kate Howarde Company presented successful weekly shows at the National Theatre, Balmain, Sydney. These shows included her own productions *The White Slave Traffic* (1914) and *Why Girls Leave Home* (1914).

Howarde's biggest success was the comedy *Possum Paddock* (1919). Written, produced and presented by Howarde, the play told the story of the financial and romantic problems of a bush family. The success of the play convinced Howarde to turn the play into a film which she starred in, produced, co-scripted and co-directed with Charles Villiers. This made her the first woman in Australia to direct a feature film. Australian censors removed a scene from the film in which an unmarried mother imagines drowning her baby. The film was released in Sydney on 29 January 1921 and was well received throughout Australia and New Zealand.

The success of *Possum Paddock* financed a ten month tour for the entire company throughout South Africa, the United States and Great Britain. Upon the company's return to Australia, Howarde made no further films, however continued to tour with her theatrical company and continued to write her own plays. These plays include the comedy *Gum Tree Gully* (1924), and the dramatic works *The Limit* (1921), *The Bush Outlaw* (1923), *Find Me A Wife* (1923), *Common Humanity* (1927) and *The Judgment of Jean Calvert* (1935).

Howarde died 18 February 1939 from cerebral thrombosis.

## Published resources

### Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

### Article

Celebrating Kate Howarde, Bertrand, Ina, 2002,  
<http://www.sensesofcinema.com/2002/22/howarde/>

### Resource Section

Howarde, Catherine Clarissa (Kate) (1864-1939), Bertrand, Ina, 2006,  
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/AS10235b.htm>

## Archival resources

### National Film and Sound Archive

[Possum Paddock : Original Release](#)

[\[Howarde, Kate : Documentation\]](#) : [\[Howarde, Kate : Set of 22 Negatives\]](#)

[\[Howarde, Kate : Two frames showing two people talking to a couple in a car : Film fragment\]](#)

### Author Details

Hollie Aerts

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