



MEDIA RELEASE

Strictly embargoed until 12:01am AEDT Thursday 20 April 2017

AACTA Announces new Feature Film Eligibility Policy and Online Video or Series Award for 7th Awards Season

Feature Film, Documentary, Short Film, Television and Online Entries Now Open

Launching the 2017 Awards season, the Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AACTA) today announced a **new eligibility policy for feature films** and introduced a **new Award – the AACTA Award for Best Online Video or Series**.

Following AACTA's changes to the Feature Length Documentary jury process earlier this year, the announcements reinforce AACTA's commitment to ensuring relevancy and best practice. The feature film eligibility policy changes and the new Online Video or Series Award aim to drive further innovation within the industry and create opportunities to further the next generation of Australian storytellers by making the AACTA Awards processes even more inclusive.

AACTA also today **called for entries across feature film, documentary, short film, television and online categories**, with the 7th AACTA Awards presenting over 50 peer-assessed awards, celebrating Australian stories, culture and creativity on the big and small screens.

FEATURE FILM ELIGIBILITY POLICY CHANGES

Following extensive industry consultation, AACTA has announced a new feature film eligibility policy for the 7th AACTA Awards in response to increasing feature film volumes in the ever-changing screen industry landscape and to allow for greater diversity and inclusivity.

Historically, feature films have been able to enter and proceed to competition for the AACTA Awards either through Direct Eligibility (via traditional theatrical release), or Pre-Selection (a jury-assessed pathway designed to allow a wider range of films, that don't meet the direct eligibility criteria, to be considered on merit and not their distribution model).

In 2017, AACTA will be replacing this two-tier process and the Pre-Selection jury with a single clear pathway that lessens the potential barriers to entry. As part of the new and more accessible eligibility policy, AACTA is broadening the definition of a 'theatrical release' to include major local and international film festival screenings (including MIFF, SFF, Adelaide Film Festival, CinefestOz, GCFF, FFS and Mardi Gras Film Festival – a full list of qualifying film festivals is attached). AACTA's revised policy also makes considerations for releases outside of a commercial cinema setting, such as VOD and SVOD platforms.

All films meeting the new eligibility criteria will be entitled to compete for the 7th AACTA Awards, creating greater inclusivity for those films that take a less traditional release path.

AFI | AACTA CEO Damian Trehwella said:

"The landscape of the film industry is constantly changing, with more and more Australian films having non-traditional releases in an increasingly challenging theatrical environment. One of the key changes to

the feature film eligibility policy this year acknowledges and embraces the significant role Australian film festivals play in the discovery and fostering of local screen talent and, with the increasingly global nature of the industry, the contribution of international film festivals toward the recognition of some of our best and most innovative works.

“We know that AACTA Award wins and nominations can generate huge exposure and positive outcomes for Australian films. After receiving the AACTA Award for Best Original Music Score and a further four nominations at the 6th AACTA Awards, **TANNA** continued to gain great international profile and reception, culminating in becoming the first Australian film to be nominated for the Oscar® for Best Foreign Language Film. Other films such as **HACKSAW RIDGE** (2016), **THE ROCKET** (2013) and **THE SAPPHIRES** (2012) also saw exceptional boosts in profile in Australia and overseas after their AACTA Award wins, with all films going on to receive numerous accolades internationally.

“We believe the new feature film eligibility policy achieves a more inclusive approach to the determination of the feature films in competition and opens the pathway for a broader diversity of films and filmmakers. All of us at AACTA are looking forward to seeing which outstanding Australian practitioners, performers and productions will be in competition this year.”

NEW AACTA AWARD FOR BEST ONLINE VIDEO OR SERIES

On the back of the abundance of exciting Australian digital content gaining huge viewer numbers and critical acclaim (both locally and internationally), the AACTA Award for Best Online Video or Series has been introduced in consultation with Screen Australia and other key organisations working in the online video and series space, including the Australian Online Video Awards and the ABC.

The inaugural Award will be open to scripted Australian productions that are intended primarily for online release and viewing. The nominees of the category will be determined by a panel of jurors with substantial experience in the field of online production and commissioning, with the winner to be determined by AFI and AACTA member voting.

Speaking of the new award, **AFI | AACTA CEO Damian Trehwella** said he hoped the award would help propel the careers of those nominated and awarded.

“Over the last couple of years a wealth of Australian content has been made specifically for online viewing, with hits including **BONDI HIPSTERS**, **THE KATERING SHOW**, The RackaRacka’s **VERSUS**, **DAFUQ?**, **AUNTY DONNA: 1999**, and **STARTING FROM...NOW!** which concluded in 2016 following five successful seasons.

“With Screen Australia’s Multiplatform Fund and other progressive funding initiatives including ABC’s *Long Story Short* and *Fresh Blood*, and Google’s *Skip Ahead*, the scope for online specific-content is only growing.

“AACTA is proud to extend the reach of our awards into dedicated online content, marking an exciting new pathway for recognising Australian talent working in the burgeoning online space.”

The AACTA Awards are proudly supported by the New South Wales Government through its tourism and major events agency, Destination NSW.

– ENDS –

NOTES TO EDITORS

FEATURE FILM ELIGIBILITY POLICY

For more information and to read the complete Feature Film Eligibility Policy, please visit <http://www.aacta.org/the-awards/feature-film-eligibility-policy.aspx>.

Qualifying Australian Film Festivals: Adelaide Film Festival*; CinefestOz Film Festival; For Film's Sake (formerly WOW Film Festival); Gold Coast Film Festival; Mardi Gras Film Festival; Melbourne International Film Festival; and Sydney Film Festival.

Qualifying International Film Festivals: Beijing International Film Festival, China; Berlinale, Germany; BFI London Film Festival, UK*; Busan International Film Festival, South Korea*; Cannes International Film Festival, France; Cannes Critics Week, France; Cannes Directors' Fortnight, France; Edinburgh International Film Festival, Scotland; International Film Festival of India, India*; Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, Czech Republic; Locarno International Film Festival, Switzerland; Montreal World Film Festival, Canada; San Sebastian Film Festival, Spain*; Shanghai International Film Festival, China; Sitges International Fantastic Film Festival, Spain*; Sundance Film Festival, USA; SxSW, USA; Telluride Film Festival, USA*; Tokyo International Film Festival, Japan*; Toronto International Film Festival, Canada*; Tribeca Film Festival, USA; Venice International Film Festival, Italy; and Warsaw International Film Festival, Poland*. Any film festivals outside of this list may be considered at AFI | AACTA's discretion.

Please note, due to the timing of the confirmation of AACTA's feature films in competition, films from the previous edition of the marked (*) festivals will be considered in the current year's competition.

CALL FOR ENTRIES

Entries for the 7th AACTA Awards across the following categories open at 9am Thursday 20 April 2017: Feature Film; Feature Length Documentary; Documentary Television Program; Short Fiction Film; Short Animation; Television Drama Series, Telefeature and Mini Series; Television Comedy Series; Light Entertainment Television Series; Reality Television Series; Lifestyle Television Program; Children's Television Series; Subscription Television; and Online Video or Series.

Entry eligibility and closing dates vary per category. All dates and information regarding how to apply for the 7th AACTA Awards can be found at <http://www.aacta.org/the-awards/7th-aacta-awards-entries.aspx> (from 9am Thursday 20 April 2017).

Please note: Entries for the Visual Effects and Animation and Hair and Makeup categories will open in June 2017.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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For further information about AFI | AACTA visit: www.aacta.org

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