



MEDIA RELEASE: 09:00pm WEDNESDAY 7 JUNE 2017

THE 64th SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL BEGINS

The 64th Sydney Film Festival (7 – 18 June) opened tonight at the State Theatre with the world premiere of Australian film *We Don't Need a Map*.

Festival Director **Nashen Moodley** was pleased to open his sixth Festival to a packed auditorium including the film's director Warwick Thornton and producer Brendan Fletcher, alongside Timmy Murrurrnga Burarrwanga, Djimbalal Ngurruwuthun, Terry Mununggurr, Adam Briggs and Gareth Liddiard, who feature in the film.

NSW Minister for the Arts, Don Harwin, said at the Opening Night Gala, "Each year as one of eight UNESCO Cities of Film around the world, Sydney welcomes thousands to take in two weeks of incredible discussion and diversity on the big screen. This year I am particularly proud to launch the Screenability program in partnership with the Department of Family and Community Services and Sydney Film Festival to extend the opportunities to see work produced by artists living with disability. From some of the very best in Australian storytelling to some of the highest profile international highlights, the festival and regional tour that follows is an opportunity to share our passion and diversity for a truly immersive experience of outstanding cinema and culture."

City of Sydney Councillor Jess Scully, representing the Lord Mayor of Sydney also spoke, welcoming audiences to come and experience all the Festival has to offer, including the Festival Hub at Sydney Town Hall. "Sydney Film Festival is our opportunity to see the world through other people's eyes, an annual dose of the empathy and diverse perspectives that we need in ever more polarised times. Sharing stories, expanding horizons and seeing the world from other angles is the ultimate News-Feed-bias-eliminator: exploring the world through film can catapult us out of our echo-chambers. I'm really looking forward to seeing everything the Sydney Film Festival has to offer over the next 12 days."

Peter McGregor, Chief Executive of the Festival's opening night partner Lexus Australia said, "Lexus applies and takes inspiration from craftsmanship, technology and innovation. In film, all these elements come together to make something truly unique and amazing. Through our partnership with the Sydney Film Festival, we are building on our support of emerging talent through creative initiatives such as the Lexus Design Award and the Lexus Short Film Series."

"Last year we announced the **Lexus Short Film Fellowship**, a \$200,000 investment in developing next generation filmmakers. This year we are excited to see the films of the four winning fellows from 2016, and we will also reveal the winning fellows of the 2017 Lexus Short Film Fellowship, with their films to premiere at the 2018 Sydney Film Festival. Our involvement in film is a progressive step forward for innovation, and a positive way for us to continue advancing art forms in Australia."

We Don't Need a Map is the work of acclaimed Indigenous director Warwick Thornton, winner of the Camera d'Or at Cannes (2010) for *Samson and Delilah*. The film investigates Australia's relationship with the Southern Cross through colonial and Indigenous history to the present day.



Also in attendance: SFF Festival Patrons **Jan Chapman AO**, **Gillian Armstrong AM**, **Bryan Brown**; 2017 SFF Official Competition jury members, Jury President **Margaret Pomeranz**, **Ann Marie Fleming**, **Rosemary Blight** and **Kini Kim**; as well as *Ellipsis* director, Lexus Australia Short Film Fellowship Jury Chair and Ian McPherson Memorial Lecture subject **David Wenham**.

A long list of SFF 2017 filmmakers and cast also attended, including; **Kriv Stenders** *Australia Day* and *The Go-Betweens: Right Here* director; *Australia Day* actors **Shari Sebbens**, **Jenny Wu** and **Mia Madden**; **Wayne Blair** *Cleverman* director; **Amat Escalante** *The Untamed* director; **Arash Kamali Sarvestani** *Chauka Please Tell Us The Time* director; *Rip Tide* director **Rhiannon Bannenberg** and producer **Steve Jaggi**; **Osamah Sami** *Ali's Wedding* actor and writer; **Jennifer Peedom** *Mountain* director; **Rachel Braunschweig** *The Divine Order* actor; **Shahrbanoo Sadat** *Wolf and Sheep* director; **Neasa Ní Chianáin** *School Life* director; **Teona Strugar Mitevaska** *When The Day Had No Name* director; **Erica Glynn** *In My Own Words* director; **Ben Lucas** *OtherLife* director; **Hope Dickson Leach** *The Levelling* director; *That's Not Me* director **Greg Erdstein** and producer-star **Alice Foulcher**; **Sascha Ettinger Epstein** *The Pink House* director; **Su Goldfish** *The Last Goldfish* director; **Hollie Fifer** *The Opposition* director; **Sarah Barton** *Defiant Lives* director; **Florian Habicht** *Spookers* director; **Daniel Monks** *Pulse* producer-star; and the recipients of the 2016 Lexus Australia Short Film Fellowship: **Anya Beyersdorf**, **Brooke Goldfinch**, **Alex Ryan** and **Alex Murawski**.

Sydney Film Festival runs 7 – 18 June 2017.

Tickets for Sydney Film Festival 2017 are on sale now. Please call 1300 733 733 or visit sff.org.au for more information.

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***Sydney Film Festival Press Pack and Images Available [HERE](#)

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

From **Wednesday 7 June** to **Sunday 18 June 2017**, the 64th Sydney Film Festival offers Sydneysiders another exciting season of cinema amidst a whirlwind of premieres, red-carpet openings, in-depth discussions, international guests and more.

Sydney Film Festival also presents an Official Competition of 12 films that vie for the Sydney Film Prize, a highly respected honour that awards a \$60,000 cash prize based on the decision of a jury of international and Australian filmmakers and industry professionals. Previous Sydney Film Prize winners: *Aquarius* (2016); *Arabian Nights* (2015); *Two Days, One Night* (2014); *Only God Forgives* (2013); *Alps* (2012); *A Separation* (2011); *Heartbeats* (2010); *Bronson* (2009); and *Hunger* (2008).

The Festival takes place across Greater Sydney: at the State Theatre, Event Cinemas George Street, Dendy Opera Quays, Dendy Newtown, Skyline Drive-In Blacktown, Art Gallery of NSW, Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace Cremorne, Randwick Ritz, Casula Powerhouse, the Festival Hub at Sydney Town Hall and SFF Outdoor Screen in Pitt Street Mall.

The Festival is a major event on the New South Wales cultural calendar and is one of the world's longest-running film festivals. For more information visit: www.sff.org.au.

The 64th Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Screen NSW and Destination NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia and the City of Sydney. The Festival's Strategic Partner is the NSW Government through Destination NSW.

