

Monday, 17 June 2019

## BLACKFELLA FILMS AWARDED THE 2019 SYDNEY UNESCO CITY OF FILM AWARD

Acclaimed Sydney-based production company Blackfella Films has been awarded the 2019 Sydney UNESCO City of Film Award at the Closing Night of the 66<sup>th</sup> Sydney Film Festival.

The award was presented to Darren Dale, Rachel Perkins and Miranda Dear by acclaimed actress Deborah Mailman, a long-term collaborator of the team who starred in the production company's ground-breaking television series, *Redfern Now*.

The \$10,000 cash prize is bestowed annually by Create NSW, under the auspice of Sydney UNESCO City of Film, to outstanding NSW-based screen practitioners whose work stands for innovation, imagination and impact.

Accepting the award, Darren Dale said, "It is humbling and thrilling to be acknowledged for making work that we are so passionate about. We consider ourselves incredibly fortunate to be able to do what we love every day. This acknowledgement is not only of Blackfella Films, but of all the incredible collaborators – the actors, writers, directors, artists, crews, the list goes on – who are so integral to any success we may have."

Rachel Perkins said, "Blackfella Films was established during a time of Indigenous cultural-resurgence. We are proud to be a part of the broader wave of Indigenous film and television that Australia rightly embraces as some of our best cultural expression. Twenty-five years on Blackfella Films is still going strong and we are working towards a more unified nation through storytelling."

The prize also includes up to four-weeks' residence at Charlie's, a hub for the Australian film-making community in Los Angeles, opened by Australians in Film, in partnership with Create NSW, AFTRS, Screen Queensland, Film Victoria and South Australian Film Corporation.

Create NSW Executive Director Investment & Engagement, Elizabeth W. Scott said, "Blackfella Films have been responsible for some of this country's most outstanding and innovative content including *First Australians* and *Redfern Now*. Each year they continue to expand their film and television slate in new and exciting ways and we are delighted to celebrate their ongoing success with this award."

**ENDS**

Please see attached images of Rachel Perkins and Darren Dale receiving their award, further images available [here](#).

## ABOUT BLACKFELLA FILMS:

Blackfella Films was founded in 1992 by writer/director/producer Rachel Perkins with fellow filmmaker Michael Riley (now deceased). Producer Darren Dale joined in 2001. In 2011 the duo resolved to establish a specialist drama arm, inviting Miranda Dear to join the team as the Head of Drama. In 2014 they further extended their capacity to include a factual division in Melbourne helmed by Jacob Hickey. Its award-winning productions have screened at the premier international film festivals including Sundance, Berlin and Toronto, and distinguished its team as creators and curators of distinctive Australian content.

Blackfella Films productions first projects included an international documentary co-venture of Indigenous filmmakers from five countries and Warwick Thornton's first two short films. At the time Blackfella Films was one of a few independent Indigenous owned companies. They took inspiration from Spike Lee's company Fourty Acres and A Mule, and by branding themselves Blackfella Films, put Indigenous creatives as the centre of their business.

Much of the next decade was absorbed by the award-winning 7-part documentary series *First Australians*. Six years in the making, the landmark multi-platform history series, broadcast on SBS Television to over 2.3 million viewers, was accompanied by an internationally acclaimed interactive website. *First Australians* was awarded Australia's top honours for documentary including the Australian Film Institute (AFI) and IF Awards, the UN Media Peace Prize, TV Week Logie and Australian Writers and Directors Guild Awards. *First Australians* has sold throughout the world and is the highest selling educational title in Australia. This series established Blackfella Films as a producer of quality high-end material and it's a reputation the company continues to enjoy.

The feature documentary *The Tall Man*, produced by Darren Dale with executive producer Rachel Perkins and directed by Tony Krawitz, received the inaugural Walkley Award for Documentary and was nominated for four Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AACTA) Awards including Best Feature Documentary. It screened at the Toronto Film Festival in 2011, was released in cinemas nationally by Hopscotch/eOne and broadcast on SBS Television in 2012.

*The Tall Man* was followed by the telemovie *Mabo* for ABC1, produced by Darren Dale and Miranda Dear and directed by Rachel Perkins, featuring Jimi Bani as Eddie Koiki Mabo and Deborah Mailman as his wife Bonita. It was broadcast on ABC1 in June 2012 to mark the 20th anniversary of the landmark High Court decision on native title. Among numerous accolades, writer Sue Smith received the 2012 AWGIE for Best Original Telemovie Screenplay and Deborah Mailman received the 2013 TV Week Logie Award for Most Outstanding Actress.

In 2012 Blackfella Films also completed production on the ground-breaking 6 x 1-hour ABC drama series *Redfern Now*, developed in collaboration with renowned UK scriptwriter Jimmy McGovern as Story Producer. The series was the first Australian drama series written, directed and produced by Indigenous Australians, and was invited to participate in both the FIPA and Series Mania television festivals in 2013. A further series of 6 x 1-hour episodes was produced in 2013 and the final telemovie instalment was broadcast in 2015.

*Redfern Now* has received an extraordinary level of critical and popular acclaim including the 2013 and 2014 TV Week Logie Award for Most Outstanding Drama Series and the 2014

AACTA Award for Best Television Drama Series. In 2013 writer Steven McGregor received the AACTA Award for Best Screenplay in Television and Leah Purcell received the AACTA Award for Best Lead Actress in a Television Drama. Director Rachel Perkins also received Australian Directors Guild (ADG) Awards for Best Direction in a TV Drama Series in consecutive years in 2013 and 2014 for her work on the series, and again in 2016 for the telemovie *Redfern Now: Promise Me*.

In 2014 Blackfella Films produced the 3 x 1-hour factual series *First Contact* for SBS that won the 2015 TV Week Logie Award for Most Outstanding Factual Program. The series garnered national attention and acclaim for engaging with a wide audience on the conditions of and attitudes towards Indigenous Australians.

The 14 x 30-minute teen drama series for ABC3 *Ready For This*, a co-production with award winning Dance Academy producer Joanna Werner, received the 2015 AACTA Award for Best Children's Television Series and the 2016 TV Week Logie Award for Most Outstanding Children's Program.

Broadcast on SBS in 2016 were the 3 x 1-hour big science series *DNA Nation* featuring Ian Thorpe, Ernie Dingo and Julia Zemiro, and a second 3 x 1-hour series of the acclaimed *First Contact*.

Also for SBS in 2016, Blackfella Films produced the major multiplatform event *Deep Water*. It comprised a 4 x 1-hour crime drama series starring Noah Taylor and Yael Stone which has sold worldwide including to the BBC, Netflix, SundanceTV/AMC and Acorn, the feature documentary *Deep Water: The Real Story* which investigates the events that inspired the drama series, and complementary online programming. *Deep Water: The Real Story* received top honours at the 2018 NSW Premier's Literary Awards, sharing the Betty Roland Prize for Scriptwriting with *Top of the Lake*.

In 2017 SBS broadcast *Filthy Rich & Homeless*, a major 3 x 1-hour factual series for SBS exploring homelessness in Australia. The feature documentary *In My Own Words* that celebrates the success of an Indigenous adult literacy program in outback New South Wales, screened at the Sydney Film Festival and was nominated for the Documentary Australia Foundation Award for Australian Documentary ahead of its broadcast on SBS and NITV.

SBS has recently broadcast a further series of *Filthy Rich and Homeless* and the two part documentary series exploring mental health in Australia, titled *How 'Mad' Are You?* Blackfella Films has established itself as leader in the industry. It is now one of the few locally owned production companies and continues to endure after more than twenty five years of providing distinctive Australian content.