



MEDIA RELEASE

Three Witness documentaries revealed

Thursday 5 March 2020: Screen Australia and Al Jazeera English (AJE) have announced the winners of the Witness pitching competition held at the Australian International Documentary Conference (AIDC) in Melbourne.

Three of the five projects pitched at the conference secured a \$100,000 commission each, with 50/50 funding from Screen Australia and Al Jazeera English to make a 25-minute documentary which will be released on AJE Witness platforms.

Head of Documentary at Screen Australia **Bernadine Lim** said, "The pitches and trailers presented at AIDC blew us away with the quality of their subject rigour, visual impact and diversity of ideas."

"These three teams have earned a unique opportunity to build professional relationships and learn from collaborating with an international, award-winning documentary platform to take their stories to the world."

Executive Producer of AJE Witness, **Fiona Lawson-Baker** said, "We are so excited to move ahead with these three filmmaking teams in collaboration with Screen Australia. We have been very impressed with the high quality of applications as well as the five pitches presented at AIDC. These documentaries capture a diverse range of human experiences against a backdrop of topical global issues. They represent the best emerging documentary talent in Australia, and we can't wait to show them on Witness for Al Jazeera's global audiences."

The focus of the pitching competition was to create an opportunity for Australian filmmakers to tell true stories with an international appeal.

The recipients are:

AT THE COALFACE

In the wake of Mongolia's ban on raw coal, this documentary follows Manibold Lkhamjav and his family as they navigate the transition away from coal. They live in Nalaikh, a sparse post-Soviet town in Mongolia, where every winter locals dig dark tunnels into the earth to cut raw coal and sell it on the black market. This project is from Victorian director Anu Hasbold.

THIS IS REALITY

East Timorese ex-resistance fighter turned artist Osme creates a fictional alter-ego called Rambo Marabunta, a roving TV reporter to question the population and interrogate his own past. He starts by posting short clips on Facebook and quickly grows into East Timor's first YouTube star. This project follows Osme's journey as the local TV station offers him a prime-time slot for the first East Timorese 'reality' TV show. This documentary is from NSW director Chris Phillips ([Lost Rambos](#)).

GIVE US GREEN, DARLING!

Darwin's 'laksa queen', Amye Un is a local personality with a cult following. When she recently chastised her local council for the lack of greenery in a video, it went viral and embarrassed the council into action. Buoyed by her popularity, Amye now wants to try her luck by standing in the Territory 2020 elections and is set to take on the Northern Territory's most powerful to 'give us green'. This documentary is from Northern Territory director Caro Macdonald.

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CONFERENCE

About Al Jazeera English & Witness

Al Jazeera English provides international news, current affairs and documentaries that places people at the heart of the story, rooted in the belief that everyone has a story worth hearing. Through its fearless journalism and award-winning programming, it tells authentic stories about people everywhere, without geographical or cultural prejudice. Today, Al Jazeera reaches more than 352 million households in 150 countries, delivering bold storytelling that informs, empowers and challenges perceptions.

AJE's Witness strand showcases independent documentaries from around the world. With inspirational and provocative stories, and intimate character-led accounts, Witness films look at the big issues from the inside out and celebrate the human spirit, with a sense of humour and poignancy even in the most difficult of circumstances.

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