

Midnight Oil, David Gulpilil and Bob Hawke - Screen Australia invests \$4 million across 15 documentaries

Monday 31 July 2017: Screen Australia today announced \$4.15 million in production investment funding for 15 new documentaries through the Documentary Producer and Commissioned programs. The projects include a companion piece to upcoming SBS drama *Sunshine*; actor Sam Neill's voyage through the Pacific as he retraces and interrogates the impact of Captain Cook's travels; and a chronicle of 76 female scientists' landmark expedition to the southernmost continent in the world, Antarctica. This is the final documentary funding announcement for the 2016/17 financial year.

"Over the past year we have supported 48 documentary titles through our Commissioned and Producer programs, distributing \$12 million to the sector," said Liz Stevens, Senior Manager of Documentary at Screen Australia. "Audiences will be able to watch around 98 hours of documentary content funded by Screen Australia on TV, online, at cinemas, film festivals and community screenings. This diverse and exciting slate of projects demonstrates the incredible richness of Australian stories and storytellers - whether it's a jackaroo changing the lives of disaffected youths in rural NSW, or the musicians and politicians who shaped a generation. It is a privilege to fund programs that will add to audiences' understanding of the world."

The funded Documentary Producer projects are:

- Theatrical documentary *Backburning* about one of Australia's most iconic bands, Midnight Oil, from Beyond Entertainment, Blink TV and Village Roadshow. From 1975 until today, this film will look at a changing nation through the eyes of the rock band. It will tell the story of Midnight Oil who, with their uncompromising attitudes, brought political awareness to their music and influenced a whole generation, making them one of the most revered, hated and storied musical acts in Australian history. Produced by [Martin Fabinyi](#) and Carolina Sorensen, executive produced by [Ron Saunders](#) and [Mikael Borglund](#), and written and directed by [Paul Clarke](#).
- *The Backtrack Boys* from Infinity Pictures, a character-driven observational documentary about the challenges faced by youth at risk in rural Australia. The feature will follow three teenage boys on the fast track towards juvenile detention before they are taken in by jackaroo Bernie Shakeshaft and his unconventional youth program in Armidale - training working dogs for jumping competitions around rural NSW. Written and directed by [Catherine Scott](#), executive produced by [Mitzi Goldman](#) and the Documentary Australia Foundation (DAF).
- Feature documentary *Beautiful Minds: The Agents of Change* from Bunya Productions, which will follow 76 female scientists on board an Antarctic expedition, and interrogate the gender imbalance in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM). Produced by [Greer Simpkin](#), executive produced by [David Jowsey](#) and directed by [Ili Baré](#), the feature has also secured funding from Create NSW, Good Pitch Australia, the Shark Island Institute and DAF.
- Vertigo Productions' *Untitled* project, the latest collaboration between [David Gulpilil](#), [Rolf de Heer](#) and [Molly Reynolds](#). The trio worked together for 2015's *Another Country*, in addition to Gulpilil and de Heer's co-written and critically acclaimed 2013 feature *Charlie's Country* which saw Gulpilil win Best Actor at the 2014 Cannes Film Festival. This project has also secured South Australian Film Corporation (SAFC) funding.
- ABC Arts documentary *We Live Here* from WildBear Entertainment and People Productions, about the residents in high-rise public housing in Waterloo whose homes are threatened by the gentrification of Sydney's inner city. Produced by Carolina Sorensen, executive produced by [Alan Erson](#), and written by Clare Lewis who will also make her directorial debut, this documentary will focus on the community's symbolic use of public art in their resistance campaign.
- Observational feature documentary *White Light* - producer/director [George Gittoes](#) follow up to his 2005 film *Rampage*, which screened at Berlin, Sydney, Melbourne and Chicago film festivals in 2006. Also produced by Hellen Rose, the film will look at 'child soldiers' - teenagers embroiled in the drug wars that pervade the predominantly African American projects of Miami, USA.

The funded Documentary Commissioned projects are:

- **Apex Gang: Behind The Headlines** from Joined Up Films for SBS - a companion piece to upcoming crime drama series *Sunshine*. Set in Melbourne's South Sudanese community it will examine what it takes to make a multicultural society viable. The documentary will be programmed in a similar fashion to the successful double billing of *Deep Water* and *Deep Water: The Real Story* in 2016. Produced by [Darren Hutchinson](#), executive produced by [Anthony Willinge](#), [Jacqueline Willinge](#) and [Daniel Brown](#), and directed by [Nick McInerney](#).
- Joined Up Films' one hour special **Australia Uncovered** (working title) commissioned by SBS - an innovative documentary that will explore contemporary inequality in Australian society. Produced and directed by [Daniel Brown](#), and executive produced by [Jacqueline Willinge](#).
- A second season of Network Ten's **Body Hack** featuring [Todd Sampson](#) who pushes his body to the limits of human endurance to better understand the human species. Sampson takes on a writing and executive producer credit in the Essential Media & Entertainment series alongside writer/producer [Chris Thorburn](#), executive producers [Chris Hilton](#) and [David Alrich](#), and director [Jeff Siberry](#).
- Science documentary **Can We Save The Reef**, which is an exploration of the ground-breaking scientific techniques used by three leading female scientists who hope to provide a solution in the urgent race to save the Great Barrier Reef. The one-hour program produced by [Colette Beaudry](#) and directed by [Adam Geiger](#) will form a part of the ABC's new Catalyst program.
- Three-part series **Don't Stop The Music** from Artemis Media for the ABC, which will examine the transformational role music can play in educating children by observing the introduction of a music program in a severely disadvantaged school in Western Australia. Executive produced by [Celia Tait](#) and [Joan Peters](#), written by Katrina Tudor, and directed by [Steve Westh](#) and [Ruth Cullen](#).
- A second season of NITV series **Family Rules**, an intimate look into modern Indigenous family life through a unique family of women - mother Daniella and her nine daughters, living in Perth WA. Produced by Metamorflix the all-female creative team is made up of series producer [Kimberley Benjamin](#), executive producer [Renee Kennedy](#), executive producer/director/writer [Karla Hart](#), director [Claire Leeman](#) and writer [Gillian Moody](#).
- Historical documentary **Hawke** from Southern Pictures for the ABC, about enigmatic politician Bob Hawke - the beer-swilling larrikin battler who came to power as the most popular Prime Minister of all time and pioneered a defining chapter in Australian politics. Producers Susan Spencer (*Four Corners*) and Geraldine McKenna (*Catalyst*), executive producer [Laurie Critchley](#) and director [Bruce Permezel](#) will use unprecedented access to the former PM to explore the paradoxes of his leadership and his legacy over a two-part television event.
- Ground-breaking two-part mental health SBS series **Mindset** (working title) from Blackfella Films, which will shine a light on the invisible epidemic of mental illness affecting around four million Australians. Produced by [Darren Dale](#) and [Jacob Hickey](#) who will also write, with BBC Worldwide attached for international sales, the series aims to break down the stigmas and stereotypes surrounding mental health issues.
- Newly announced Foxtel series **Uncharted with Sam Neill**, a co-production between Essential Media & Entertainment (AU) and Frame Up Films (NZ), which will mark the 250th anniversary of Captain James Cook's first voyage to Australia. Renowned actor Sam Neill will retrace Cook's travels - from the Arctic to the Antarctic, from Tahiti to New Zealand and Australia - to meet the people and places transformed by the master navigator's multiple expeditions throughout the Pacific. From writer/producer [Owen Hughes](#), producer [Aline Jacques](#), executive producers [Chris Hilton](#), [David Alrich](#) and [Sam Neill](#), writer/director [Sally Aitken](#), and director [Kriv Stenders](#).

[Click here](#) to see more information about this round of successful projects.