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Screen Australia announces over \$2.7 million for 9 documentaries

Wednesday 30 March 2022: Screen Australia has announced more than \$2.7 million of documentary funding for five projects through the Documentary Producer Program, two through the Documentary Commissioned Program, one through the First Nations Department and one through the Online Production Fund.

Projects include a feature documentary exploring and celebrating 30 years of iconic Australian band, The Wiggles; gripping true story *Fighting for Hakeem*, about imprisoned refugee footballer Hakeem al-Araibi and the power of global social media; and online documentary *Finding Yeezus* which investigates a cult internet religion and will be released on Auntie Donna's secondary YouTube channel Grouse House.

Alex West, Head of Documentary at Screen Australia said, "We're proud to announce such a diverse slate of projects that will explore stories of human resilience, challenging prejudice and the lives of some of Australia's biggest music icons. Screen Australia is also very excited to prioritise history projects like *Her Name is Nannie Nellie* and *First Weapons* that will focus on Indigenous achievements told by First Nations people."

Angela Bates, Screen Australia's Head of First Nations said, "Dena Curtis and Darren Dale have a strong track record in realising documentary series of this scale and we're thrilled to support them in bringing Curtis' original and distinct concept to fruition in *First Weapons* in what will be an unparalleled examination into a part of First Nations history."

Screen Australia's Head of Online, **Lee Naimo** said, "Comedians Cameron James and Alexei Toliopoulos have already had incredible success with their investigative mystery podcasts *Finding Drago* and *Finding Desperado*. Now teaming up with Auntie Donna's Haven't You Done Well Productions, we're delighted to see them bring their expertise and comedy skills to the screen for *Finding Yeezus* in what promises to be an enticing and entertaining documentary for an online audience."

The documentary funded through the First Nations Department is:

- ***First Weapons***: First Nations filmmakers Dena Curtis ([Back to Nature](#)) and Blackfella Films' Darren Dale ([First Contact](#)) have partnered to bring Curtis' original idea to the screen in this six-part series for the ABC. *First Weapons* showcases the inherent science and knowledge behind some of the world's oldest, most innovative and deadliest weapons used by First Australians for thousands of years. Presented by Philip Breslin, each episode will examine, recreate and test traditional Indigenous weapons. Complementing the producing team is director Dean Gibson ([Incarceration Nation](#)) and Jacob Hickey ([Filthy, Rich and Homeless](#)) as executive producer and writer. The project will be distributed through ABC Commercial.

The full list of First Nations production funding blocklines is available [here](#).

The Documentary Producer Program projects are:

- ***Fighting for Hakeem (working title)***: A feature documentary from writer/director Matthew Bate ([Sam Klemke's Time Machine](#)) about refugee footballer Hakeem al-Araibi and the global campaign that fought to free him from prison. It tells the gripping true story of how former Australian football captain Craig Foster and a ragtag team of social media warriors challenged two monarchies, a military junta and the world's most powerful sporting body FIFA to rescue Hakeem. Produced by Gal Greenspan ([Moja Vesna](#)) and Rebecca Summerton ([The Hunting](#)), this project is financed with the support of VicScreen and the South Australian Film Corporation.
- ***The Wolves Always Come At Night***: A feature documentary that explores the journey of Mongolian nomadic families who are displaced from their life as herders and forced to migrate. The film depicts a story of urbanisation and climate change. Director Gabrielle Brady of award-winning [Island of the Hungry Ghosts](#) is working with creative teams in Germany, Mongolia, and Australia on this hybrid

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project. Producers are Julia Niethammer (*Island of the Hungry Ghosts*), Ariunaa Tserenpil (*Bedridden*) and Rita Walsh (*The Assistant*).

- ***Gudinski***: This feature documentary is the story of music pioneer, the late Michael Gudinski, who transformed the business on the back of his determination to let Australian music find its own voice. This project follows the real life events of Gudinski’s life spanning a 50-year period, from starting his own independent record company to becoming a major international player and household name in Australia - a rollercoaster ride of iconic artists, classic albums and mega tours. Helmed by a highly experienced team in director/co-writer Paul Goldman ([Such is Life: The Troubled Times of Ben Cousins](#)), co-writer and former editor of Rolling Stone Toby Creswell ([All the Way](#)) and producer Bethany Jones (*Molly: The Real Thing*).
- ***Her Name is Nanny Nellie***: In this documentary for NITV, writer-director and Yuin/Awabakal man Daniel King documents his mother’s journey to restore and recover a trio of nameless statues buried in the archives of the Australian Museum to honour her ancestors and reclaim their life stories. Alongside award-winning producer Ben Pederick ([Westwind: Djalu’s Legacy](#)) and executive producer Charlotte Seymour ([Elders](#)), King will take a hybrid observational and investigative approach as he retells Indigenous stories through Indigenous eyes, rewriting how Aboriginal people are represented in Australia’s public. *Her Name is Nanny Nellie* has also received production funding from The Post Lounge.
- ***The Untitled Wiggles Project***: Four music mates decided to don yellow, red, blue and purple skivvies and make rock ‘n’ roll for children. The improbable story of iconic Australian band, The Wiggles, is a global feature film and Australia/New Zealand co-production between SAM Content’s Sally Aitken ([Playing with Sharks](#)) and Aline Jacques ([Slim & I](#)), Augusto Entertainment’s Cass Avery (*The Girl on the Bridge*) and Daniel Story (*Mosley*), and Frog Productions’ Fraser Grut (*10,000 Dreams*). *The Untitled Wiggles Project* explores the band’s improbable origins, meteoric global rise, and reinventions in a story about authenticity, inculcating self-belief, love and trust in what you do. Madman Entertainment will distribute the feature documentary with Arclight handling International Sales.

The Documentary Commissioned projects are:

- ***Me and My Tourette’s***: Around one in every hundred Australians are diagnosed with Tourette’s Syndrome (TS), a condition that has no cure and is so little understood, even by medical science. *Me and My Tourette’s* is an observational documentary for SBS’s Australia Uncovered strand that follows three people with TS as they challenge society’s prejudices and strive towards acceptance. This project is produced and directed by Lisa Dupenois ([Secrets of Our Cities](#)) alongside executive producers of Joined Up Films, Jacqueline Willinge and Daniel Brown whose most recent projects include [The Truth About Anxiety with Celia Pacquola](#) and [What Does Australia Really Think About...](#). The project is financed with support from Screenwest and Lotterywest.
- ***The School (working title)***: A three-part series for SBS from the team behind [The Mosque Next Door](#), which will follow the leader of one of Australia’s fastest growing Islamic schools as he embarks on a bold new social experiment: a pilot program for students and their families that aims to break down the barriers between communities and breach the fault lines of modern multicultural Australia. Queensland executive producer Ross Wilson will team up with producer Dylan Chown. *The School* is financed in association with SBS, with support from Screen Queensland.

The full list of documentary funding blocklines is available [here](#).

The documentary funded through Online Production is:

- ***Finding Yeezus***: Comedians, pop culture detectives and writers/producers Cameron James and Alexei Toliopoulos will embark on an all new investigation into a world of re-imagined realities, hip hop heads, new age cults and the very nature of belief, all through the lens of a barely remembered



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online video game. Aunty Donna's Max Miller ([Glennridge Secondary College](#)) will direct alongside writer Sophie Braham (*Reputation Rehab*), producer Rebecca Metcalf (*No Gangsters in Paradise*) and story consultant Anna Broinowski (*Forbidden Lie\$*). The series will be released on Aunty Donna's secondary YouTube channel [Grouse House](#).

The full list of online production funding blocklines is available [here](#).

The projects receiving documentary development funding can be found [here](#).

DOCUMENTARIES NOW SUPPORTED THROUGH THE ONLINE PRODUCTION FUND

Since 1 July 2021, documentary projects that have a primary release on a social media platform have been able to apply for funding via Screen Australia's Online Production fund. This includes [support for Black AS Rebooted](#), and now *Finding Yeezus*. More information is available [here](#).

CHANGES TO PRODUCER PROGRAM GUIDELINES

As of 21 February 2022, the guidelines for the [Documentary Producer Program](#) have been streamlined to become a single rather than two-stage process. All production funding decision outcomes will now be confirmed at stage 1 and unless further specific information is requested to make an assessment, projects will no longer require a further stage. More information is available [here](#).

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