



## ***Black Divaz*: Priscilla is not the only queen in the desert**

**Wednesday 4 October 2017:** Production is underway on the one-hour television documentary *Black Divaz* for NITV, which has received production funding from Screen Australia's Indigenous Department, in association with Create NSW.

*Black Divaz* follows the inaugural Miss First Nation pageant where six Indigenous drag queens from around Australia battle it out over five days for the coveted crown. With challenges, talent quests and lip sync battles - all done in the balmy heat of Darwin - the competition is fierce.

Taking viewers behind-the-scenes, *Black Divaz* will focus on the personal stories of three of the contestants, travelling to their home-towns to reveal the challenges, heartbreaks and triumphs that have made them who they are and brought them to the stage.

The one-off documentary will be directed by Adrian Russell Wills (*The Warriors*, *Wentworth*) with producers Michaela Perske (*After the Apology*, *Destination Arnold*) and Gillian Moody (*Family Rules*). Wills and Perske previously teamed up for the award-winning documentaries *88* and *Boxing for Palm Island*, while Moody produced Wills' short films *Daniel's 21<sup>st</sup>* and *Angel*.

"*Black Divaz* gives our mob a whole new kind of role model, only instead of running for Olympic gold, singing in a music video, or acting on the big or small screen, these role models perform in heels, glitter and huge wigs," said director **Adrian Russell Wills**.

"My reason for making this film is because I feel that in our communities we still haven't really had the conversation about homophobia and acceptance of our LGBTQI+ family members. Too many of our youth still take their lives due to the shame and fear of rejection because of who they really are. In our film our extraordinary characters give us their stories, their humour, their sisterhood and their hearts, all in a beautiful truth. This story could not have come at a better time, with the message 'it's okay to dress up!'" Wills added.

"As equality itself is being debated across our nation right now, it's a reminder that stories told with honesty and heart can open minds," said **Penny Smallacombe**, Head of Screen Australia's Indigenous Department. "The creative team behind *Black Divaz* have the vision and experience to deliver an entertaining and positive insight into the world of Indigenous drag queens, while also bringing to the surface the deeper issue of prejudice and having the courage to be oneself."

NITV Channel Manager **Tanya Orman** said: "NITV is committed to sharing all our people's stories and as part of this, we have commissioned *Black Divaz*, a documentary which embraces and celebrates our vibrant Indigenous LGBTQI+ community. This brave and bold documentary from Adrian Russell Wills, explores underneath the glitz and glamour, to uncover the very serious issues facing our community including homophobia and youth suicide."

*Black Divaz* will screen on NITV in 2018. The series will be filmed in Melbourne, Sydney, Kempsey and Darwin.

**Production credits:** *Black Divaz* is a production for NITV. Principal production funding from Screen Australia's Indigenous Department in association with Create NSW. Produced by Michaela Perske and Gillian Moody, and directed by Adrian Russell Wills.