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Six Australian screenwriters selected for the NCIS: SYDNEY S1 Script Department Program

Thursday 14 December 2022: The successful recipients of the NCIS: SYDNEY S1 Script Department Program have been announced today by Screen Australia, in collaboration with Paramount Australia and New Zealand (ANZ), CBS Studios and Endemol Shine Australia (a Banijay Company).

Writers Rachael Alford, Ella Cook, James Cripps, Siobhan Domingo, Josh Sambono and Clare Sladden will work in the script department for the highly anticipated *NCIS: Sydney S1*.

Screen Australia Head of Content, **Grainne Brunsdon** said, “We were blown away by the volume of applications for this initiative, showcasing the breadth of screenwriting talent we have around the country and a testament to the NCIS global brand. A huge congratulations to the successful participants. Screen Australia is proud to support early to mid-career writers to take part in a global series and not only gain knowledge and experience in the Script Department of a renowned drama but also bring their authentic perspectives to the Sydney iteration of *NCIS*.”

Head of Drama and Executive Production, Paramount ANZ, **Rick Maier** said, “Emerging writers thrive on collaboration and mentorship, hence our excitement for this brilliant initiative. This seat at the table could turn out to be a winner for everyone. Jot down these names for future reference. I’m sure we’ll all be hearing a lot more.”

Chief Executive Officer Endemol Shine Australia, **Peter Newman**, said, “The calibre of applicants was extraordinary, which is a strong indication that the future of Australian screenwriting is secure. Working alongside established screenwriters, the six recipients will contribute to the scripting process therefore adding their creativity and storytelling talent to the Australian iteration of this iconic franchise.”

The 10-week full-time paid program will immerse the screenwriters in all facets of the script department and development process. The writers will be supported by experienced creatives including senior script coordinators, writers and editors, who will guide the process and contribute directly to the writers’ learning and professional development.

The successful writers are:

- **Rachael Alford** is a writer and actor from Melbourne, Australia. Graduating from Ballarat Arts Academy with a Bachelor of Arts in Music Theatre, she’s performed in many live shows across the country. In 2018, she gained her Master of Screenwriting from the Victorian College of the Arts. Soon after, she received VicScreen’s Key Talent Writing Placement on [Neighbours](#), where she went on to work as Script Coordinator, then trainee Editor/Storyliner. She wrote her first episode for *Neighbours* in its final weeks. In recent months, Rachael has been notetaking for Fremantle’s [Rock Island Mysteries](#) and Endemol Shine’s [RFDS](#), as well as developing her own projects.
- **Ella Cook** is a screenwriter, script editor and producer, with a background in Drama Development. Her short film *The Exit Plan*, starring Paapa Essiedu and Marcia Warren, premiered in 2021 at Flickerfest and played at festivals internationally. The film won Best International Film at Norwich International Film Festival and Best Drama at Women Over 50 Film Festival. For stage, Ella’s work has been performed at Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Edinburgh’s Traverse Theatre, and London’s Theatre N16. Currently, Ella is adapting a novel to TV for the UK, and is pitching as a finalist in the 2022 AACTA x Monster Pictures Pitch for her horror concept *Specimen*.
- **James Cripps** is a screenwriter and script editor. Previously Screentime’s Drama Development Coordinator, James was involved in shows such as [Wolf Creek](#) (Stan), [Pine Gap](#) (Netflix) and [Underbelly Files: Chopper](#) (Nine Network). His script editor credits include [Informer 3838](#) (Nine Network) and [Janet King 3](#) (ABC). His comedy-drama series *High Rotation* was developed with support

Media enquiries: Maddie Walsh
+61 2 8113 5915 | Maddie.Walsh@screenaustralia.gov.au
www.screenaustralia.gov.au



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from Screen Australia and recently won the 2021 Australian Writers' Guild Monte Miller Award (Long Form). After being shortlisted in the 2019 Monte Miller Awards, his horror-thriller *Blooded* was optioned by Beyond Entertainment and was a finalist in the 2021 AACTA Pitch: Bite competition.

- **Siobhan Domingo** is a screenwriter and director. Their first short film, *Double*, screened at Cannes Film Festival in 2017, and in 2021 Siobhan received funding to develop an original television series, *How To Lose Weight and Survive the Apocalypse* in partnership with Screen Queensland and Wattpad Studios. In 2022 Siobhan was chosen to participate in the Impact Australia development program to write and develop their original series *The Almost Insufferable Burden of being a Talented Woman*.
- **Josh Sambono**, a Jingili man, is an action and horror writer based in Western Sydney. He has written several short films that have screened at festivals across the world. His First Nations horror short *Suspect* premiered at Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival (BIFAN) in Korea in 2020 and won Best Australian Short at Sydney's A Night of Horror International Film Festival. He has been in many writers' rooms for television shows developed by Bunya Productions and Blackfella Films. His television writing debut came in 2021 on Warwick Thornton's AMC+ vampire hunter series [Firebite](#). He admires the work of Jordan Peele, The Duffer Brothers and Rebecca Sugar. Josh has a passion for genre storytelling with First Nations characters.
- **Clare Sladden** is a Meeanjin/Brisbane-based screenwriter and director. After finding success on the festival circuit with her short films and online with her AWGIE-nominated web-series, *Freudian Slip*, Clare segued into the narrative audio space, where she wrote, directed and produced the Audible Original podcast, *Winding Road*, and wrote on Audible's Wentworth spin-off series, *The Fall Girl*. Clare earned her first television credit on Stan Original series, [Eden](#), and she developed her original project, *Pathological*, as the successful participant of Screen Queensland's Bradford Winters Lab, a program designed to facilitate emerging showrunners. She was also named on Inside Film Magazine's 2022 'Rising Talent' list.

Produced by CBS Studios in association with Endemol Shine Australia, *NCIS: SYDNEY* marks the first iteration of the hit NCIS series based outside of the United States. Announced in February, the original series and latest installment of the iconic global franchise will launch exclusively on Paramount+ and Network 10 in Australia. *NCIS: SYDNEY* is distributed by Paramount Global Content Distribution outside of Australia.

This script department program is supported by Screen Australia in collaboration with Paramount ANZ, CBS Studios and Endemol Shine Australia with industry partner Australian Writers' Guild.

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Media enquiries: Maddie Walsh
+61 2 8113 5915 | Maddie.Walsh@screenaustralia.gov.au
www.screenaustralia.gov.au



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