

For immediate release

NITV's new children's drama series *Grace Beside Me* currently in production

Grace Beside Me (working title), a new 13-part children's television series which will premiere on NITV in 2018, has begun filming in the Scenic Rim in Queensland.

Adapted from the award-winning novel by Sue McPherson, *Grace Beside Me* is the charming story of Indigenous teenager Fuzzy Mac, who just wants to be an ordinary teenager and have fun with her mates. But that's not so easy when your Ancestors have other plans and you keep seeing ghosts!

With one foot in the Indigenous realm of culture, Country - and spirits! - and the other firmly planted in the world of a 21st century teenager, Fuzzy Mac's journey is to realise she belongs to both in her own unique way.

Starring as Fuzzy Mac is Kylic Masella. Her co-stars include Mairehau Grace and Tjiirdm McGuire as her best buddies Tui and Yar, and Tessa Rose and Charles Passi as her Nan and Pop.

Lead broadcaster NITV has co-commissioned the series with ABC's children's channel ABC ME. Screen Australia is a major investor in the series, with Screen Queensland, ABC and Cutting Edge. Disney Channel has licensed the series in Australian and New Zealand, whilst the rest of world distribution is with Canada's 9Story Media Group. The Australian Children's Television Foundation, Screen Australia's Indigenous Department and Screen NSW also supported early development in the series.

Producers for the series are Lois Randall (*Gods of Wheat Street*) and Dena Curtis (*8MMM Aboriginal Radio, Shadow Trackers*), NITV executive producer is Mary-Ellen Mullane, ABC TV executive producer is Libbie Doherty, and directors are Lynn-Maree Danzey (*A Place to Call Home, Love Child*), Beck Cole (*Here I Am, Black Comedy*) and up and comer Nicholas Verso, whose first feature *Boys In The Trees*, was selected for the Venice Film Festival.

NITV's Channel Manager, Tanya Orman, said: "We are delighted to introduce Fuzzy Mac to Australia's Indigenous children, as well as all children around the country. *Grace Beside Me* is a remarkable achievement for NITV, its funding partners and the Indigenous production community, notably, the exceptional team at Magpie Pictures. This is a very special opportunity and we look forward to adding a new dimension to this Australian Indigenous children's story."

Producers Lois Randall and Dena Curtis said: "We are so thrilled to have begun filming with our diverse and exceptionally talented cast, and to see the adaptation of Sue McPherson's beautiful book coming to life on the screen."

ABC Television Head of Children's, Michael Carrington, said: "We're excited to see this exceptional story being brought to life by Lois and Dena and their incredibly talented team at Magpie Pictures. Our ABC ME audience will be able to relate to the trials and tribulations Fuzzy faces as a teen while also exploring some aspects of Indigenous culture".

Screen Australia's Head of Production, Sally Caplan said: "*Grace Beside Me* is a funny, uplifting coming-of-age story, with a wonderful script from some of Australia's most talented Indigenous screenwriters. We can't wait to see this unique live-action children's series brought to our screens by the accomplished all-female producing team at Magpie Pictures."



Screen Queensland CEO Tracey Vieira said *Grace Beside Me* was developed with investment from Screen Queensland as part its commitment to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander talent and strengthening the local industry.

“Sue McPherson is an award-winning Queensland-based writer and it is encouraging to see her profile grow as part of this new series to be filmed in Queensland,” Ms Vieira said.

Grace Beside Me will have its world premiere on NITV in January 2018, with the ABC ME broadcast set for mid-2018.

For further media information and interview requests:

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