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Table of Contents

2	About Focus on Ability
3	Event Schedule
4	Prizes and Categories
5	About Martin Wren OAM and Paula Duncan AM
6	About Anne Goyer
7	Australian Judges
9	International Judges
11	Screen Writing Judges
14	Entertainment
15	International Documentary Entries
16	International Short Film Entries
18	Open Documentary Entries
20	Open Short Film Entries
22	Australian & New Zealand Short Film
23	Australian & New Zealand School Documentary
25	NOVA Employment Major Sponsor
26	Thank you to our Supporters

About

For the 18th consecutive year NOVA Employment proudly presents the Focus on Ability Short Film Festival.

This prestigious international festival invites filmmakers of all experience levels to submit short films or documentaries under five minutes in length, each highlighting the lives, talents, and achievements of individuals with disabilities. Focus on Ability encourages storytellers worldwide to contribute to the growing movement of inclusivity and awareness.

A key highlight of the 2026 festival is its continued partnership with SBS, ensuring widespread recognition for these inspiring films. The festival has proven itself a powerful force in challenging societal perceptions and breaking down barriers. Many past entrants ranging from seasoned filmmakers to first-time storytellers have shared gripping, emotional, and eye-opening narratives that have resonated deeply with audiences worldwide.

Beyond the screen, the 2026 FOA Festival is once again touring across Australia, offering audiences an opportunity to experience these impactful stories firsthand.

The Focus on Ability Short Film Festival is more than a competition; it is a movement. Through the universal language of film, FOA continues to drive meaningful change, fostering a world where ability is celebrated above all else. Whether you're a filmmaker or a viewer, your support helps reshape narratives and inspire a more inclusive future.

Founded in 2009 by NOVA Employment's CEO Martin Wren OAM, the festival is built on a belief in the remarkable capabilities of people with disabilities. Martin envisioned film as a transformative medium, capable of reshaping perceptions and attitudes toward these individuals worldwide. Alongside Paula Duncan AM, a luminary in the Australian film and television industry with a deep commitment to supporting people with disabilities, they have tirelessly championed this festival.

Past films have been both educational and inspirational, reaching audiences in over 170 countries and engaging more than 4 million film views. Viewers have shared how these entries have profoundly changed their attitudes and perceptions.

Over the past year, the festival has expanded its reach with additional screenings in Thailand, Spain, New Zealand, Malawi, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, the UK, and all across Australia.

With an audience capacity exceeding 4 million people and still growing, the festival offers unparalleled exposure for emerging filmmakers and provides a platform for individuals with disabilities to share their important messages with the world.

Event Schedule

Opening Performance	<i>Matt McLaren</i>
Host Welcome	<i>Paul Hancock</i>
Message from Creator	<i>Martin Wren OAM</i>

Most Online Votes Award

Judges Choice Documentary Award

International Entrant
School Entrant
Open Entrant

Message from Ambassador	<i>Paula Duncan AM</i>
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Best Screen Writer
Best Producer
Best Director
Best Actor

Message from International Representative	<i>Mikias Mulugeta</i>
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Judges Choice Award

International Entrant
School Entrant
Open Entrant

Message from Major Sponsor NOVA Employment	<i>Anne Goyer, General Manager</i>
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NOVA Employment Choice Award

Final Performance	<i>StarAbility Dancers</i>
Closing Remarks	<i>Paul Hancock</i>

Prizes and Categories

NOVA EMPLOYMENT CHOICE AWARD

Winner - AUD \$5000 cash prize, sponsored by NOVA Employment

*Australian submissions only. At NOVA Employment's discretion, the award may be presented either to the filmmaker or to the person featured in the winning film, in recognition of their contribution to promoting ability and inclusion.

Most Online Votes - Short Film or Documentary

Winner - AUD \$5,000, sponsored by NOVA Employment

AUSTRALIAN OPEN SECTION

Judges Choice - Short Film

Winner - AUD \$5000 cash prize, sponsored by NOVA Employment, Diversity Pictures Development Mentorship, Featured Guest appearance on Let Me Talk podcast with Zoe Markos, Two one-hour career sessions with Director and Producer Daisy Friedman, valued at USD \$200, Two one-hour career sessions with Canadian filmmaker Lucy McNulty, valued at USD \$500, Two one-hour session with Tsu Shan Chambers of WiseGoat Productions, valued at AUD \$500, Two one-hour career sessions with Diversity Pictures CEO and Founder Jessica Orcsik, valued at USD \$500, Two one-hour career sessions with Director Isaac Elliot, valued at USD \$200, One one-hour mentoring session with award winning Australian producer Judi Levine of Such Much Films, valued at USD \$250.

Judges Choice - Documentary

Winner - AUD \$5,000 cash prize, Featured guest appearance on Let Me Talk Podcast with Zoe Markos, Two one-hour career sessions with Director and Producer Antony Talia, valued at USD \$400, Two one-hour career sessions with Niyati Libotte, valued at USD \$200, Two one-hour career sessions with Tahyna MacManus, valued at USD \$200, Two one-hour career sessions with Bryanna Reynolds, valued at USD \$200.

Judges Choice - Best Screen Writer

Winner - Two one-hour screenwriting mentorship sessions with Sarah Barton, valued at USD \$500, Two one-hour screenwriting mentorship sessions with Gil Seltzer, valued at USD \$500, Two one-hour career sessions with Diversity Pictures CEO and Founder Jessica Orcsik, valued at USD \$500, Two one-hour career sessions with Alyssa Stratton, valued at USD \$500, Two one-hour career sessions with Travis Jeffery, valued at USD \$500

Best Actor in Short Film

Winner - Two one-hour career sessions with Nicole Lynne Evans, valued at USD \$500, Two one-hour career sessions with Danny Gomez, valued at USD \$500, Two one-hour career sessions with Acting Coach and Producer Robbie Ryde, valued at USD \$500, Two one-hour career sessions with ER Ruiz, valued at USD \$500, Featured guest appearance on Let Me Talk Podcast with Zoe Markos, One one-hour career coaching session with Nicole MacNaughton of Untamed Talent, Two one-hour career sessions with Casting Director, Director and Producer Russell Boast, valued at USD \$500.

Judges Choice - Best Director

Winner - Two one-hour career sessions with Director and Producer Daisy Friedman, valued at USD \$200, Two one-hour career sessions with Director Isaac Elliot, valued at USD \$200, Two one-hour career sessions with Director Tony Gardiner, valued at USD \$500, Featured guest spot on Let Me Talk Podcast with Zoe Markos.

Judges Choice - Best Producer

Winner - Two one-hour career sessions with Canadian filmmaker Lucy McNulty, valued at USD \$500, Two one-hour sessions with Tsu Shan Chambers of WiseGoat Productions, valued at AUD \$500, Two one-hour career sessions with Diversity Pictures CEO and Founder Jessica Orcsik, valued at USD \$500, Two one-hour career coaching sessions with Nick Hardcastle, valued at USD \$200, Two one-hour career sessions with producer Brian Altounian, valued at USD \$500, One one-hour mentoring session with award-winning Australian producer Judi Levine of Such Much Films, valued at USD \$250, One one-hour career coaching session with Nicole MacNaughton of Untamed Talent, Featured guest appearance on Let Me Talk Podcast with Zoe Markos.

AUSTRALIAN & NEW ZEALAND SCHOOL SECTION

Judges Choice - Official Selection Short Film

Winner - LG Product Package, Two one-hour mentoring sessions with Acting Coach and Producer Robbie Ryde, valued at USD \$500

Judges Choice - Official Selection Documentary

Winner - Toshiba Product Package, Two one-hour career sessions with Director and Producer Antony Talia, valued at USD \$400.

INTERNATIONAL SECTION (Outside of Australia)

Judges Choice - Official Selection Short Film

Winner - AUD \$5000 cash prize, featured guest appearance on Let Me Talk Podcast with Zoe Markos, Two one-hour career coaching sessions with Nick Hardcastle, valued at USD \$200, Two one-hour career sessions with producer Brian Altounian, valued at USD \$500, One one-hour mentoring session with award-winning Australian producer Judi Levine of Such Much Films, valued at USD \$250, Two one-hour career sessions with Casting Director, Director and Producer Russell Boast, valued at USD \$500, One one-hour career coaching session with Katie McGrath of Arise Artists Agency.

Judges Choice - Official Selection Documentary

Winner - AUD \$5,000 cash prize, Two one-hour group career sessions with Sarah Barton, valued at USD \$400, Two one-hour career sessions with Niyati Libotte, valued at USD \$200, Two one-hour career sessions with Tahyna MacManus, valued at USD \$200, Two one-hour career sessions with Bryanna Reynolds, valued at USD \$200, Featured Guest on Let Me Talk Podcast with Zoe Markos.

Martin Wren OAM

CEO NOVA Employment

Martin literally fell into working in the disability industry after a period of illness. An offer to work with eager teenagers wanting the opportunity to use their abilities as workers sparked a love and passion that has lead him to where he is today. A combination of hard work, creative talent, invaluable connections and supportive staff has helped to develop the successful company that NOVA Employment Ltd is today.

With offices across the Sydney basin, there are literally thousands of people with disability creating and living meaningful futures through their employment. Martin's take? – "NOVA's an Australian manufacturing business – we make taxpayers!" As both a passionate advocate for people with disability and the CEO, Martin is always looking for ways to increase the knowledge of the staff and to nurture a safe learning environment for trainees and job seekers.

Looking for ways to further develop an inclusive society Martin created 'Focus On Ability' – a short film celebration of the achievements and ability of people with disability. 'Focus' was designed to inspire students to create positive images around disability and influence tomorrow's decision makers to help build a truly inclusive society. The 'Focus' concept took off, reaching far beyond Sydney to include schools across Australia and New Zealand. But there's more! 'Focus' has caught the imagination of film makers around the world and today with viewers and voters measured in the hundreds of thousands and a record number of entries, 'Focus' educates, entertains and has become a powerful tool for attitudinal change.

Also an author, Martin's 2016 book, 'The Ten Demands' helps identify the key elements of effective employment service support for people with disability.



Paula Duncan AM

NOVA Employment Ambassador

Focus on Ability Short Film Festival Ambassador

Paula Duncan has worked extensively on stage, film and television, and has been a household name throughout Australia for over half of her life, not only as an actress but as one of Australia's most loved personalities. She has appeared in TV dramas including Cop Shop, The Young Doctors, Prisoner, Neighbours, Richmond Hill, Home & Away and Mother & Son, lifestyle programmes, current affairs shows and commercials (most notably for Spray & Wipe, Caltrate and Jenny Craig). She has been honoured by Channel 9's, This is Your Life, and during the five years she starred in the TV series Cop Shop, she was awarded no less than 7 Logies, including Best Actress and Most Popular Actress and Personality. Her stage work includes The Importance of Being Earnest, by Oscar Wilde, Noel Coward's Blithe Spirit and Bedroom Farce by Alan Ayckbourn. Paula starred in the feature film Strange Bedfellows, with Paul Hogan and Michael Caton and the ABC mini-series East Of Everything with Gia Carides. Paula also made her return to Neighbours as Harold Bishop's wife, Carolyn Johnstone. Most recently Paula co-starred in another ABC series, The Hiding. For her work with charity, Paula was nominated for the Australia Day Award for work with people with disabilities and in 1997 was awarded the Executive Woman of the Year for Contribution to the Arts and the Community. Paula was also presented with an Australian Achievement Award for work with people with disability, and most notably was awarded an Order of Australia for her Outstanding Contribution to the Entertainment Industry and the Australian Community. Paula is also Ambassador for The Centre for Volunteering and Ambassador for The Australian, New Zealand Gynaecological Cancer Group.

Paula has sponsored and produced a wide range of charity events and has raised in the vicinity of \$14 million for Australian charities.



Anne Goyer

GM NOVA Employment

Anne joined NOVA Employment in 2001, and has been involved in every aspect of the organisation's business operations, gaining extensive experience across programs, services, and operations.

Anne managed NOVA's Registered Training organisation, increased the performance of NOVA's disability employment service, launched the NSW Transition to Work Program for school leavers with disability transitioning to the workforce, in 2005, eventually transforming it from a state based program into an NDIS funded service delivering School Leaver Employment Supports, in 2016.

Taking up the role of General Manager in 2015, together with a handpicked team of senior executives, Anne has established the company as a high performance business with a reputation for consistently delivering results.

Her personal heroes are Wolf Wolfersberger and Dale DiLeo, who dedicated their careers to ending the segregation of people with disabilities in community life and employment. Anne feels privileged to work alongside CEO Martin Wren, an inspirational leader and strong advocate for employment for people with disability.

Her ability to engage the business community has resulted in strong relationships between NOVA Employment and the business community, and she believes that NOVA is instrumental in changing employers' attitudes about hiring people with disabilities. Anne is a passionate advocate for inclusion and integration of people with disabilities within the workforce. Together with a like-minded management team, NOVA Employment has an extensive body of work that shows what workers with disabilities can achieve.



Thank you for your support.

Donate Now

Australian Judges



Travis Jeffery

Travis is an award-winning actor and film maker best known for his roles in blockbuster, Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes, Angelina Jolie's Unbroken, Gallipoli, and Pirates of the Caribbean. Other credits include, Top End Wedding, Danger Close, Preacher, Love Child, and Heartbreak High.

In 2024, Travis made his writing debut with Dusty, a multi-award-winning short film that has earned Best Film, Best Actor, Best Director, Best Makeup, Best Cinematography, Best Production Design honours across Australian and international film festivals. He will next be seen in upcoming dark comedy Birthright, which premiered at Tribeca Film Festival.



Cinzia Coassin

Cinzia Coassin started her career as a theatre/film and television actor. She has been able to expand in all areas of the entertainment industry. Her role as Faith Martins Casting Assistant, has allowed her to assist on The Strip and Blood Brothers for the 9 Network, Spartacus, Blood and Sand; Gods of the Arena; Spartacus, Vegeance; Legend of the Seeker; K9, and the feature films 33 Postcards; The King is Dead; Satellite Boy; Evil Dead (the re-make); Cabin in the Woods; four ABC USA pilot season. FOX, CBS, NBC.

Cinzia was involved in the casting process for The Kings Daughter; The Dressmaker; Kill Me Three Times; Camp (NBC, USA); the 2014 CBS pilot season; The Code; and Hiding (ABC Australia). Also involved with the Australian search for the hit HBO series Game of Thrones; Hercules; The Shannara Chronicles; The Bad-lands; and THE BFG. In 2019, Cinzia was nominated for a Casting Guild Award for Best Casting in a Feature Film for her work on UNSOUND, an Australian Feature Film supporting disability and diversity which received an AACTA nomination for Best Indie Feature Film in 2020.



Isaac Elliott

Isaac Elliott is an AACTA-nominated and three-time Australian Directors Guild (ADG)-nominated film and television director. His work draws on his experience growing up in Alice Springs and living with a disability, bringing unique characters to life with empathy and dark humour.

After a motorcycle accident in 2007 left him paraplegic, Isaac turned to filmmaking. His graduation film A Static Wind won Best Tertiary Short Fiction at the 2016 ATOM Awards and made him a finalist in the 2017 Lexus Short Film Fellowship.

He produced and featured in the acclaimed documentary Finke: There and Back and directed the viral Burlesque Blokes. His ABC/ACTF TV special The Legend of Burnout Barry earned an ADG nomination.

In 2021, he co-created and directed episodes of MaveriX (ABC/Netflix), earning multiple award nominations.

Isaac continues to develop bold new work, including SHAFTEd, a dark comedy about disability in the mining industry, and HARD AS PUCK, a documentary on Australia's first Para Ice Hockey team.



David Cameron

David graduated from Sydney's National Institute of Dramatic Art to become an award winning Stage and Screen Actor. He has played major roles for the Melbourne Theatre Company and Sydney Theatre Company. He was also in the first Australian Rocky Horror Show.

David's TV and film credits include Mad Max and My First Wife, and his multi award-winning performance in the TV mini-series Water Under The Bridge. He is an acclaimed Voice Over Artist. David has directed many TV Drama's including State Coronor Good Guys, Bad Guys, his AFI-award winning episode of The Wayne Mani-festo, the ABC's Seachange, Jonathan M Shiff's Wicked Science and was Set-Up and Series Director for the undercover cop series Stingers. David also directed many episodes of City Homicide and was the Voice Director on the Media World BBC Disney Children's TV series Dogstar.

David is an Associate at the VCA School of Drama having run their Film and TV Course. He also conducts Directing Workshops at the VCA Film and TV School and holds Screen Performance Workshops at 16th Street FTSI and TAFTA.



Lisa Duff

With numerous award-winning credits to her name, Lisa Duff's producing career spans over 20 years. Her feature film credits include *Last Train to Freo*, *Last Cab to Darwin* starring Michael Caton and Academy Award nominee Jacki Weaver, and *Unindian*, the first feature financed by the Australia India Film Fund, starring Brett Lee and Tannishtha Chatterjee.

Lisa also produced the critically acclaimed documentary *Sexing the Label* for SBS, *The Future Makers* for Discovery Channel, and several short TV dramas and documentaries for Australian broadcasters, including *Drama Road* for SBS and Leah Purcell's *Aunty Maggie* and *The Womba Wakgun* for ABC's *The New Black*.

She completed a Masters thesis on the global film industry's impact on Australian filmmaking culture, holds a Juris Doctor degree, and most recently worked for 5 years as a Senior Production Investment and Development Manager at Screen Australia, overseeing feature film and TV drama projects.



Nick Hardcastle

Nick Hardcastle is an Australian actor, presenter, writer, and recording artist whose career spans stage, screen, and radio across Australia, the UK, and the USA. His diverse stage credits include *Priscilla Queen of the Desert the Musical*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Ruben Guthrie*, and *An Adult Evening of Shel Silverstein*.

On screen, Nick has appeared in *Pure Genius* (CBS), Emmy-winning *Social Connected* (KCET), *Home and Away*, *All Saints*, *Saturday Disney*, *Video Hits*, *Pizza*, and *Changi*, among many others. His film work includes *Love and Penguins*, *Liquid Bridge*, *Boytown*, and *12 Pound Balls*, for which he won Best Original Composition at the Portland International Comedy Film Festival for his song "One Champion."

A successful recording artist, Nick has released albums with ABC Music, Shock Records, Universal, and Warner. His self-titled pop album was named one of the Top 20 Albums of the Year by *The Sydney Morning Herald*. He also works extensively as a writer and producer.



Tsu Shan Chambers

Tsu Shan Chambers is an actor, writer, and producer who left a senior executive career to pursue her passion for telling powerful, thought-provoking stories that spotlight social issues. She produced the award-winning feature *Unsound*, centred on deaf culture and pride, which won Best Indie Film at the 2020 AACTA Awards and secured global distribution, including Netflix ANZ and Fuse TV US.

Her recent projects include *SUKA*, a multicultural action drama broadcast on Channel 9 and a top pick on Prime Video, and *MY EYES*, a heartfelt family drama starring Adam Garcia and Kieu Chinh, released theatrically in Australia and the U.S. in 2025.

Recognised as a leader in the industry, Tsu Shan was elected to the SPA Council in 2023 and featured on *IF Magazine's* Rising Talent list and the inaugural AA122 list of influential Asian Australians. She is also a Charities Grant recipient and serves on multiple industry committees championing screen equity and inclusion.



Niyati Libotte

Niyati Libotte is an award-winning director, creative producer and musician working across film, television and digital media. Her work focuses on empathy, impact and amplifying voices, particularly those that are underrepresented.

Alongside her professional practice, Niyati has lectured at the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS), working with emerging filmmakers on the creation of over 150 short films. She has also collaborated with Indigenous youth through **Directing the Hero Within** and mentored students with disability through the Academy of Media and Focus on Ability Awards.

Her screen work includes directing **Growing Home with Jamie Durie** (Channel 7, 2024), producing **Australian Fashion: Past, Present & Future** (SBS, 2025), and the Emmy-winning climate drama **Scorched** (Network 9, 2008). Her work in the disability space includes the ABC feature **Duncan's Story**, as well as a biopic in development about an Australian of the Year.

Niyati favours films that feel honest, carry a point of view and stay with you, grounded in the belief that stories really can change the world. 8

International Judges



Bryanna Reynolds

Bryanna is an Australian-born documentary filmmaker, director and producer based in Los Angeles. Before transitioning into directing documentaries, she built a career producing more than 200 episodes of unscripted television across the United States, Canada and Australia. Her credits include **The Curse of Oak Island** for the History Channel, **Mystery at Blind Frog Ranch** and **Filthy Fortunes** for Warner Bros. Discovery.

Drawing on years of experience crafting compelling factual stories in fast-paced television, Bryanna founded Jurassic Spud Productions to create cinematic documentaries that celebrate extraordinary people and the communities that shape them.

Bryanna is passionate about documentary filmmaking because she believes real stories have the power to connect, educate and inspire. She is drawn to subjects that spark curiosity and leave audiences with a deeper appreciation for the world around them, whether through stories of community, science, exploration or human perseverance.

Her recent projects include **The Last Eight**, a documentary celebrating the volunteers behind the iconic Rose Parade, and **Outback to Orbit**, her debut feature documentary. Through every film she creates, Bryanna strives to preserve meaningful stories, amplify remarkable voices and remind audiences that some of the most extraordinary stories are the ones happening in real life.

Bryanna is honoured to be part of the Focus On Ability Short Film Festival and is grateful for the opportunity to be part of the festival. She believes festivals like Focus On Ability play an important role in celebrating diverse voices, fostering meaningful conversations and showcasing the power of documentary storytelling to inspire positive change.



ER Ruiz

ER Ruiz was born in Los Angeles California. He is an American actor burn survivor who played the role of Gillon the FX original series *Sons of Anarchy*, making his debut on the episode, 'The Revelator' in the series' first season, ER portraying a lead member of the One-Niners.

His most recent projects include BET's *The Family Business*, Stephen King's *Lisey's Story* on Apple amp, *Worth* with Micheal Keaton directed by Sara Colangelo for Netflix September 2021.



Lucy McNulty

Lucy McNulty (she/her) is an award-winning actor, filmmaker and founder of Strange Company Productions, a boutique production company dedicated to championing underrepresented voices and telling female-centred, socially conscious stories. Her directorial debut, **Chicken**—which she wrote, directed, produced and starred in—won Jury's Choice and the DEAI Award at the Thomas Edison Film Festival, alongside a Leo Award, Best Script at Santa Barbara ShortFest and Best Performance at Oskia Bright (UK). The film was acquired by CBC and screened at over 40 international festivals.

Through Strange Company, Lucy has produced a growing slate of acclaimed films, including **Attendance** (Whistler 2024, Pendance 2025), **The Ballad of Niall McNeil** (a spaghetti western musical created by and starring Niall McNeil), **Rupture** (about the gender pain gap) and **How Brief**, starring Emmy-winner Tatiana Maslany and directed by Kelly McCormack.

She is also a co-founder of DropShock Pictures, producing the genre-breaking feature **Hunting Matthew Nichols**, named one of *Deadline's* "2025 Horror Movies to Watch."

A graduate of Studio 58's acting conservatory and a 2024 resident of the CFC's Norman Jewison Film Program, Lucy serves as President of Wet Ink Collective—a writer-led initiative for women in film and theatre. She's drawn to bold, character-driven storytelling and is committed to making films that challenge convention, reflect the complexity of real life and expand who gets to be seen and heard on screen.



Judi Levine

Judi Levine has had an extensive producing career in feature films, television mini-series and documentaries, and has been associated with award-winning film projects since her first short feature PLEAD GUILTY, GET A BOND won an AFI award for Best Screenplay in a Short Film.

Levine produced the award-winning feature film THE SESSIONS starring Oscar-winner Helen Hunt, and Oscar-nominees John Hawkes and William H. Macy. A highlight of Levine's career, the film won numerous international awards including Audience Awards at the Sundance, San Sebastian and Mill Valley Film Festivals, a Sundance Special Jury Prize for Ensemble Cast, and acting nominations and awards at the Independent Spirit, Golden Globe and Academy Awards.

In 2017, Levine was a co-producer on the WWII drama THE CATCHER WAS A SPY starring Paul Rudd, Paul Giamatti and Guy Pearce which premiered at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival and opened across the US that same year.

Levine recently completed the romantic comedy FALLING FOR FIGARO starring Joanna Lumley and Danielle Macdonald due for release in 2021, and is currently producing the comedic drama HOW TO PLEASE A WOMAN, in Perth, Western Australia.

While Levine has a number of projects in development through her company Such Much Films, she also tours with the seminars JUMPSTART HOLLYWOOD, aimed at helping aspiring artists find an easier path to establishing themselves in Hollywood.



Nicole Danek MacNaughton

Nicole Danek MacNaughton is a talent manager, producer and co-founder of Untamed Artists LA, based in Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. She represents a roster of actors working across film and television, with clients appearing in projects including *The Pitt*, *Homestead*, *The Rookie* and *9-1-1*.

As a producer, Nicole recently produced *My Type*, a Super 16mm short film directed by Daniela Ruah that premiered at the 41st Santa Barbara International Film Festival and has since screened at BAFTA-qualifying festivals in Europe. The film will next screen at the LA Shorts International Film Festival, a BAFTA- and Academy Award-qualifying festival. She also produced *Reeling*, which premiered in competition at SXSW 2025 before being acquired for distribution by NEON.

Through her production company, High High Productions, Nicole develops filmmaker-driven scripted and documentary projects. She continues to work at the intersection of talent representation and independent film, championing distinctive voices and stories with lasting impact.



Nicole Lynn Evans

Nicole Lynn Evans was selected as one of the TOP 20 Actors from Historically Underrepresented Communities in 2020 by the Casting Society of America.

She can currently be seen in her recurring roles on SUPERSTORE NBC GOOD TROUBLE freeform and SPECIAL season 2 Netflix.

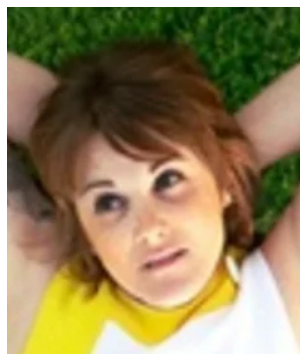
Screen Writing Judges



Sarah E Fahey

Sarah E. Fahey's notable work includes her significant contributions to Vh1's *Hit The Floor* (featuring Teyana Taylor, Logan Browning, Taylour Paige, and Kimberly Elise) from 2012 to 2019. Her role spanned across various aspects of the show, including producing over forty episodes, writing five episodes, and guest-starring in two episodes. She also demonstrated her creative prowess by writing, creating, and directing the Emmy-qualifying, supplementary series *Dancers Diaries*, which aired on Vh1 and Vh1 digital.

Prior to her tenure on the staff of *Hit The Floor*, Sarah showcased her versatility by creating digital content for esteemed companies such as Universal, Disney, ABC, and Viacom. Her writing skills are also evident in her work for ABC primetime hits *No Ordinary Family*, *Brothers & Sisters*, *Eli Stone*, and *Dirty, Sexy, Money*.



Alyssa Stratton

Alyssa Stratton is an accomplished Los Angeles-based screenwriter and author whose credits span major global networks and international film festivals. An alumna of the prestigious London Film School, Alyssa has written over 40 episodes of television airing across Disney Junior, Warner Bros., Netflix and HBO Max, including work on the GLAAD Award-winning series **Firebuds**.

Her original filmmaking and screenwriting have earned critical acclaim, with her short film **The Idea of Growing Old** winning the Audience Award at the Citizen Jane Film Festival, and her script **Poodle Lagoon** taking "Best of the Fest" at the 2025 LA Animation Festival and honours at the 2026 British Animation Festival.

Beyond her extensive work for the screen, Alyssa has authored eight picture books, all about discovering awe and celebrating the wonder of nature.



Gil Seltzer

Gil Seltzer is a screenwriter based in NYC with roots in South America and the Middle East. He crafts pressure-cooker scenarios that focus on characters who are on the outside looking in and struggling to make connections.

He's won the PAGE Award, has been selected for Roadmap's writing program and is a Stowe Story Lab fellow. He's also a Sundance, Tribeca and SXSW award-winning film editor who recently worked with director Bradley Cooper on **Is This Thing On?**, starring Laura Dern and Will Arnett.



Mike Ellis

Mike Ellis is proud to have worked as a writer/consulting producer on the Netflix smash-hit show, *INSATIABLE* for two seasons. His first smash hit was *THE WEDDING PLANNER* starring Jennifer Lopez and Matthew McConaughey, which was number one at the box office two weeks running. Most recently, Mike and his writing partner, Sybil Vilette sold their female-driven, sports-themed, feature dramedy, *SEEING FAITH*, to Hallmark in 2024.

They are currently in the last stages of development with the producers.

Just prior, the duo created the half-hour comedy, *RAISING THE BAR*, on which Denis Leary and his Amoeba Films, through his deal with Fox, are on board as Producer. Bill Cunningham (Showrunner of *Scrubs*, *The Goldbergs*) is Showrunner, as well as David Hayter (writer of *Warrior Nun*, *X-Men 1 and 2*, *The Watchmen*) as EP.



Sybil Vilette

Sybil Vilette and her writing partner, Michael Ellis sold their female-driven, sports-themed, feature dramedy, *SEEING FAITH*, to Hallmark in 2024. They are currently in the last stages of development.

Just prior, the duo created the half-hour comedy, *RAISING THE BAR*, on which Denis Leary and his Amoeba Films, through his deal with Fox, are on board as Producer. Bill Cunningham (Showrunner of *Scrubs*, *The Goldbergs*) is Showrunner, as well as David Hayter (writer *X-Men 1 and 2*, *The Watchmen*) as EP.

Sybil began her career producing and starring in much sought-after Sundance and Los Angeles Film Festival hit independent films. As an actress, she went on to star opposite Helen Mirren in the life story of Ayn Rand for Showtime and many other films and television series, including the lead female role, opposite Ving Rhames, in the reboot of *Kojak*, for USA Network.



Sarah Barton

Sarah Barton is a 2010 Churchill Fellow with 30 years filmmaking experience mainly with the disability community. Her first film *Untold Desires* (1994) about sexuality and disability won the first Logie Award for SBS television and an AFI Award. In 2003 Sarah created and produced 70 episodes of the award-winning disability community television series *No Limits*. In 2017 Sarah's feature documentary *Defiant Lives* about the disability rights movement premiered at Sydney Film Festival and also screened at the United Nations in New York. Sarah runs a video on demand service dedicated to streaming great films about disability. In 2024 Sarah was the key support person for her daughter Stella who competed in the Paris Paralympics in para-dressage.

My normal might be different to yours and that is ok.

Please change your perception of what normal is and make the world a safe place for people that have invisible disabilities like me.

Title: I Am Normal

Author: Denna Trask

Category: Open Entrant - Documentary

Year: 2023

Entertainment

Matt McLaren

Whilst Matt is easily recognisable by his signature bright red keyboard and guide dog, it is his music that has cemented him as one of Newcastle's most wanted musicians.

Matt combines his skills as a music producer with an eclectic mix of new and old school technology to create a live show that will make you question your own ears.

Using a combination of music equipment and his winning personality Matt provides the best of both worlds- the range of songs, continuous flow of music and seamless production of a DJ and the spontaneity, energy, and crowd interaction of a live band.

Ten years' experience as a full time performer has not allowed Matt to become content with his music- instead using it as his drive to ensure that his live performance stays up to date with current music trends and hits. Rest assured the classics are always included.



StarAbility Dancers

The StarAbility Dance Performance Group have been dancing, performing, and fundraising since 2006. (Formerly the Special Olympic Dancer Performance group), and are currently sponsored by NOVA Employment.

They are honoured to be associated with NOVA Employment and have an outstanding record in the community of achievement, success and spreading joy. They have also entertained and participated in workshops with corporate Australia to continue to educate the entire community on the positive contribution people with disability can make to all areas of our lives.

Importantly the StarAbility dancers have inspired the creation of at least 15 additional like-minded dance groups spreading the enjoyment and active support in the broader Australian Community. Through their energy, hardwork and positive contribution the dancers have raised in excess of \$2 million dollars to support the lives of people living with disabilities and to further focus on people's abilities rather than disabilities.

The Dancers have been invited to be Australia Day Ambassadors here in NSW for almost 20 years. They have been the Australia Day Ambassadors to Sydney and Newcastle but equally important to rural towns such as Thredbo, Cessnock, Bingara and Kiama. They perform, give the Australia Day Address, welcome the new citizens, and get to know the community. They are amazing. They work very hard to be the best.



The Dancers have performed in front of audiences in excess of 20,000 people and on television but also enjoy performing for schools and community groups where they can inspire their audiences to participate positively in community life.

This year, The StarAbility Performance Group has performed at the Australia Day Ceremony in Merrylands, at the At The Ark Gala night on the Gold Coast to assist in fundraising for domestic violence and abuse and will be performing at a corporate event at the ICC late October. They are very proud Australians.

International Documentary

Name	Film Title	Country
Brendon Motta e Camila Gelbcke	Engenhocas - 6ª Mostra Dislexia qando Arte	Brazil
Samuel Otálora Quintero	Huerfanas	Colombia
OHCHR Regional Office for East Africa	Educational Video on Accessibility	Ethiopia
OHCHR Regional Office for East Africa	Educational Video on Reproductive Health	Ethiopia
OHCHR Regional Office for East Africa	Educational Video on Right to Educate	Ethiopia
EHRC and Ethiopian Women with Disability National Association	Educational Video on the Right to Employ	Ethiopia
EHRC and Ethiopian Women with Disability National Association	Educational Video on the Right to Marry	Ethiopia
Samson Anteneh	The Complete Person	Ethiopia
Neelabh Parashar	Bring Me An Echo	India
Burim Haliti	Champion Teacher	Kosovo
Burim Haliti	For A Better World	Kosovo
Ganimete Sava	Mind Notes	Kosovo
Ganimete Sava	The Champion Of The Wave	Kosovo
Burim Haliti	The Parquet Giant	Kosovo
Ganimete Sava	The Symphony Of Colours	Kosovo
Lele	Miracle Story Holding Onto His Dream	Malawi
Chekwube Eze	Unmute: The Story of Wisdom	Nigeria
Magnifique Nsanzemaliya	I Was Qualified	Rwanda
Ikonik Media Australia (Pvt) Limited	Story of Hesara	Sri Lanka
Bunyanut Yodchak	A Day With The Blinds	Thailand
Ghost Cat Film	BLIND	Thailand
Rachapant Sukrattanachaikul	I Can See	Thailand
Porawat Chawrin	Khru Chao	Thailand
Peerapat Suthat	Street Brushstroke	Thailand
Kizza Teflon Kizza	The Underlooked	Uganda

International Short Film

Name	Film Title	Country
Henok Abusnet Habte	Focus	Ethiopia
Osvaldo Ponce	SMA	Argentina
Micaela Milagros Vetri	The Control Sector 11	Argentina
Atopor Shabdayan	To Let	Bangladesh
Jonatas Rubert	A diferença entre mongóis e mongoloides	Brazil
Tone Deaf	Deaf Date	Canada
Tone Deaf	Deaf Roomate	Canada
Seana Kozar	Pas de deux: A Dance for Two Generations	Canada
Seana Kozar	The Flight of Ellen Bird	Canada
Junyu Huang	Before them	China
Pavla Vankova	Different	Czechia
Habtaddis Tamrat	Be Greatful	Ethiopia
Beyond Limit	Flux Creative Group	Ethiopia
Tuaf	Enlightened Soul	Ethiopia
Winners Group	Inner Melody	Ethiopia
Robel Alemayehu Nigatu	Made Me My Jet	Ethiopia
Andualem Girmajarso	Still Able	Ethiopia
Victory Group	The Broken Drum	Ethiopia
Yalem Medrek	The Color Of Melody	Ethiopia
Naol Alemayehu	The Magical Rekebot	Ethiopia
Teyem Films	Walking Stick	Ethiopia
Les Arts Sensibles	Clair De Lune	France
Rahma Rachdi	Handibroken Fantoms (lol)	France
Fabien Didelot	Je suis - I am	France
Fabien Didelot	Le Barrage - The Roadblock	France
Isaac Francis	All is Well	India
Isaac Francis	Love and Care	India
Mahendra Kumar Saini	The Handicap	India
Fyonli Films	Touch Of Love	India
Ritwik Das	You Are The Hero	India
Urmediaireland	Philomena	Ireland
Agrabah Associazione Genitori per l'Autismo APS	Operazione Liberta	Italy
Zawadi Sketches	Best Day Ever	Kenya
Zawadi Sketches	I am Sorry	Kenya
Zawadi Sketches	Maybe try the inclusive angle	Kenya
Leon Khoo Entertainment	Cerebral Palsy	Malaysia
Glass Ceiling	Guardians of the Wild	New Zealand

International Short Film

Name	Film Title	Country
Community Care Trust	Kitchen Mischief	New Zealand
Mosgiel Abilities Resource Centre	Lazy Sunday	New Zealand
Guillermo Rojo	Apagada	Spain
Matilde Gimeno	ONA	Spain
Dutra, Cruz & Ocdy	That's So Me	Brazil
Chinthaka Thilakshana	Unbroken	Sri Lanka
Affogato	Affogato	Thailand
Thungsong Hometown	Authastic	Thailand
Sorntum Wiayporn	Good Luck and Good Wind	Thailand
Happy Birthday	One More Frame	Thailand
KHAMPUN	Listening to the light	Thailand
Win Family	The Ability to Change Lives	Thailand
The Project Life Offical	The Blade She Chose	Thailand
Ekkawat Sankhavesa	The Love That B(l)inds Us	Thailand
Imogen Butler	Vogue	United Kingdom
Joe Guintu	Amor Fati	United States
Maximus Ouellette	Antsy Antics	United States
Anna Pakman	Back to the Dark Ages	United States
Leah Mei Gold	Brother, I Stole Your Chromosome!	United States
Amanda Pinto	Mac & Cheese	United States
Petra Kuppers	Cocoon: A Car Accident and a Year of Amnesia	United States
Tatiana Paris	Minnie May I	United States
Vincent Rutley	Neighbourhood Watch	United States
Hope Baker	Pause	United States
Marisa Jean Giachetti	Slow Down	United States
Nina Storey	Strangely Optimistic	United States
Ajani Murray	Will You Carry Me	United States
Austin Chapman	Wolf in Weeds	United States

Open Documentary

Name	Film Title	Country
Jessica Harden	A Day In The Llife	Australia
Zane Stewart	A New View	Australia
Moirra Maloney	Ageing with Down Syndrome	Australia
Andy Meier	An Accidental Artist	Australia
Nevmedia	Between the weird and wonderful	Australia
Tim Thompson	Beyond Expectations	Australia
Kimberley Tickner	Beyond The Label	Australia
Sally Newman	Blossom - The documentary	Australia
Matt Williams	Brewing Blind	Australia
Peter Chambers	Cranky Pete	Australia
Compass Creativators	Creativators "Pun Masters"	Australia
Juana Fran Ramirez and Isabelle Pegrum	Dear Parkinson's	Australia
Good Things Australia	Digital Champions - Making Good Things happen at SXSW Sydney	Australia
Kale McQuade	Finding Our Voice - The ChIPS ChUNES Project	Australia
Zac Stevenson	Focus	Australia
Pepper Smith	Good Things Come in Threes	Australia
Patrick Francis	Green Future	Australia
Christina Green	I Belong Now	Australia
Eliza Brearley	I'm Just Doing Me	Australia
Team Cara	In My Own Tempo	Australia
Jay Reid	Isn't That A Strange Rainbow?	Australia
Leon Rakai	Lest Truth Be Buried	Australia
Halie Clacy	Let The World See	Australia
Jane Byrne	Listen	Australia
Julia Lewis	Maggie's Music	Australia
Kent Man	Me Makes Lego	Australia
Karin Balmer	My Brother Hugo	Australia
Tracey Ly	My Journey with Morquio	Australia
Imbi Mannik	My Proudest Moment	Australia
Disruptive Media	Oliver is an Artist	Australia
Tomas Chiaverini	Otto Draws	Australia
Andy Mambach & Suzanne Whiteman	Peta Puppets	Australia
Diversity and Disability Alliance	Redefining Possible: Four Voices, One Community	Australia
Jack L. Pardy	Ride With Tom	Australia
Alex Sideratos	Road Trip	Australia
Mirjana Gligorevic	Spectrum Of Possibilities	Australia
Natalie Loxton	Step Into My Footprints Dyslexia	Australia

Open Documentary

Name	Film Title	Country
Peter Cullen	The Game of Life	Australia
The Go Gang	The Go Gang	Australia
Abundabiliteez Productions	The Hero Behind the Hero	Australia
Teagan Ryatt	The Limitlessness of Art	Australia
Aurora Support Services - Frontier Academy	The Long Goodbye	Australia
Neville Hiatt	The Very Special Popcorn Love Behind the Scenes	Australia
Cerebral Palsy Alliance	Thread	Australia
Steven Fletcher	Through My Eyes	Australia
Dane Noonan	What Life Can Be	Australia
Bella Sese	You Were Always There	Australia
Kyra Culloton	You've Got This!	Australia

Open Short Film

Name	Film Title	Country
Teresa Macleod	Print Making Lesson	Australia
Andrew Hammond	A Day At The Fire Station	Australia
Callum Clarke	A Day In Life With A Bmx Racing Disability	Australia
Levi Paton	A Simple Magical Dream	Australia
Tayla Richardson	Anteroom	Australia
Raine Alexandra	Big Eyes	Australia
Purple Brown Productions - Living Arts Program	Big Fat Nothing Burger	Australia
Sally Newman	Blossom - The Trailer	Australia
Zachary Ross	Brain Wreck	Australia
Aiden Schefe	Bring Me No. 9	Australia
Litharian Care PTY LTD	Click	Australia
Michael Need	Creativity Block	Australia
Compass Creativators	Donkey Care At Compass Farm	Australia
Ruby Corbett	Don't Judge A Bully By Its Cover	Australia
Carotte Sarcelle	Dubbo Zoo	Australia
Nick Campbell	Emergency	Australia
Shriya Rangaraju	Everything It Took	Australia
BAM Arts Inc.	Express Yourself	Australia
iFilms at Sages	Finding Calm Through Tai Chi	Australia
Distinctive Options	Galaxy Adventures	Australia
Thrive Support Services	I Am Jordan	Australia
Michel Labosse	I Love my fish	Australia
Thrive Support Services	I Need My Coffee	Australia
Wallara Performing Arts/Media Program	In My Head	Australia
Joel Emmett	Inescapable	Australia
GRID Series	Jordz	Australia
Michelle Worthington	Joy Jar	Australia
Sally Newman	Just Say Hello	Australia
Glenn Shegog	Life's A Stage	Australia
Paul Easter	Lil Juno... Stay Weird	Australia
Iain Misselbrook	Lord of the Worlds	Australia
Cerebral Palsy Alliance	Magic School	Australia
Jessica Gould	Masquerade	Australia
Co-Hive Creative Industry Employment Pathways Program	Maybe It's Time	Australia
Bodhi Everman	My Love of Music	Australia
Bingah Hardiputra	My Nervous System	Australia
Yasmina McGlone	Nowhere to Hide	Australia
Neville Hiatt	Popcorn Love	Australia

Open Short Film

Name	Film Title	
Joseph Giannini	Seven Minutes To Live	Australia
Blairlogie Living and Learning Inc.	The Bookshop	Australia
James Kurtze	The Cattery	Australia
House of Cards Theatre Co.	The Cottage News	Australia
Marcus Ten Low	The Idea Of Love	Australia
Jobin George	The Last Message	Australia
Logun James	The Men's Project	Australia
Compass Creativators	The Perfect Pair	Australia
Mustafa Ali	The Price of Consciousness	Australia
Ben Strum	The Princess Inside	Australia
Thomas Mcnamara	The Script Was	Australia
Paul Easter	The Secret Ingredient	Australia
Peter Vance Music	Time	Australia
Megan Adrain	Too Much Word	Australia
BAFS (Bayley Arts Film School)	Vampires	Australia
GRID Series	Viper	Australia
Paul Easter	Visiting Uncle Leo	Australia
Greystanes Disability Services	We Are Luminous	Australia
House of Cards Theatre Co.	When Last We Met	Australia
Callum Wilson	Sometimes I Get Up	Australia

Australian & New Zealand School Short Film

Name	Film Title	Country
Mambourin Movie Makers	Am Magical Dining Experience	Australia
Seth Kilgariff	Above US	Australia
Learning Assistance Faculty Multimedia Class	Adventure of the Missing Ball	Australia
Rany Thach	All About The Students	Australia
Cranebrook High School Support Faculty	Back to CHS: The Pandemic	Australia
Sparter Productions	Beyond Popularity	Australia
Kellyville High School Media Team	Eggs and Soldiers	Australia
Waverley College	Emucation	Australia
Hume Valley Group 1	Gone Before Roll Call	Australia
Dean Tangas	Insomnia	Australia
Cobury West P.S.	Just Another School Day	Australia
A.E.S.C.	Needle	Australia
MC Senior Class	Our Japanese Holiday	Australia
Nepean School Secondary Class	People	Australia
Rachael Hooker	Secret To The Support Unit	Australia
Warringa Park School	Take Me Shopping	Australia
Hume Valley Group 1	The Bean Incident	Australia
Lismore High Support Drama Elective	The Case of the Terrible T-Rex	Australia
Ocean View College	The Future	Australia
Thrive	The Nine Sheep	Australia
Redlynch State College	The Perfectly Playful Puppet Parade	Australia
Kilparrin Teaching and Assessment School and Services	The Spaghetti Flood	Australia
Arsh Aggarwal and Team Film	The Unheard Voice	Australia
Endeavour Sports High	Written By You	Australia
Blennz Homai Campus School	Brains!	New Zealand
Wilson Tech	Wilson's Got Talent	New Zealand

Australian & New Zealand School Documentary

Name	Film Title	Country
Al Taqwa College	Ayna's Way	Australia
Fir Razali	Before We Pour	Australia
Iona Presentation College Year 11 ATAR Students	Ben Rocks	Australia
Lily Stoneham	Brick by Brick: At His Own P	Australia
Alessio Capaccio-Lauw	Going Up	Australia
King Park Public School	I AM	Australia
Teyla-Bella Townshend	It Doesn't Define Me	Australia
Sienna Berner	Just Call Me Sienna	Australia
Nepean School	Melad	Australia
Jackson Grey	My Life With Autism	Australia
Giant Steps Tasmania	Redonciliation Day	Australia
Redland District Special School	Redlands Ready	Australia
Annie Kanety - Inclusive Education Unit Armidale Secondary College	Side by Side	Australia
Tallowood School	Tallowood CAPA Team	Australia
St Edmund's College	The Bright Side	Australia
Morgan Cross	The Soft Sides of Sound	Australia
Camielle Joiner	This Is Me!	Australia
Marra School Stuentis	Year 1	Australia
Jake Price and Makee Enricoso	Inspired by Eden	New Zealand
Paraparaumu College	The Greatest Show Inclusive dance on the national stage	New Zealand

**This is such a wonderful festival.
I use it as part of a Year 9 Film
unit now - so the students
explore many abilities other
than their own.**

**And both their skills and person-
al development from participa-
tion is humbling from a teacher's
perspective, so thank you.**

**Title: Express
Author: Seymour College SA
Category: School Entrant - Short Film
Year: 2019-2021
Location: Australia**



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Major Sponsor of the Focus on Ability Film Festival

NOVA Employment is an Australian Non-Profit Disability Employment Service that has been in operation since 1990.

NOVA provides specialist job seeking assistance and post placement support to people with all types of disability. With a dedicated executive management team, CEO Martin Wren and GM Anne Goyer advocate passionately for people with disabilities to find quality employment.

There is overwhelming evidence that diversity and inclusion are essential to business success and benefit everyone. NOVA believes that commitment and effort can lead to a truly inclusive world, and to that end, NOVA works extensively with employers to change perceptions of the value of staff with disabilities.

Over the past 36 years, NOVA has demonstrated that with tailored support, people with disabilities can succeed in a competitive business environment and earn award wages.



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Sean: If you had to send one message out and it was going to go to the whole world, what would that message be?

Matt: *Don't be afraid*

Title: Matt

Author: Sean Dobra

Category: Open Entrant

Year: 2015

NOVA.

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SHORT FILM FESTIVAL

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

