



**ARTS ACCESS VICTORIA**

**THE  
OTHER  
FILM  
FESTIVAL**

# **The Other Film Festival 2016**

## **Final Report**



**This report is available in other formats on request including large print, Braille, audio CD and a summary in plain English**

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Catherine, the festival Volunteer Coordinator, speaks with Alastair McEwin, Disability Discrimination Commissioner. Photo by Paul Dunn

Cover photo: Actor Bethany Robinson. Photo by Pippa Samaya

## Executive Summary

The Other Film Festival is a biennial film festival based in Melbourne that features films, presentations, forums and workshops by, with and about people with disability. It has been produced by Arts Access Victoria since its inaugural festival in 2004.

At the heart of the festival is the adage 'nothing about us without us', which encapsulates the philosophy of the disability rights movement that people with disabilities should be actively engaged in all programs that relate to their lives. The driving goal of The Other Film Festival program is to amplify the voice of people with disability, with a strong emphasis on stories that are led by, or narrated by people with disability.

The festival ran from Wednesday 28 – Friday 30 September, at State Library Victoria, in the Experimedia space. During these three days 32 films were screened, including 10 short films made by local emerging filmmakers with disability. The program had 11 sessions, including screenings, panel discussions, talks and Q&A sessions with a total of 18 speakers.

The Other Film Festival received 157 submissions from 37 countries. The festival screened 32 Australian and international films. There were 11 sessions featuring screenings, talks, panels and Q & A sessions. Total audience numbers in 2016 including festival and touring screenings exceeded 1250.

In 2016 the festival established new exciting partnerships with Melbourne Fringe Festival and State Library Victoria, with The Other Film Festival being programmed as part of the Fringe Festival, and State Library Victoria hosting the festival in Experimedia.

The festival delivered exemplary standards of access, with Auslan interpreters provided for all sessions and captioning and audio describing provided for each of the 32 films screened. Live captioning and live audio description were provided for the opening night. The venue was fully physically accessible, including the stage.

A new Festival Director was appointed in 2015, with Mija Gwyn taking on the role, becoming the first Festival Director who is a Deaf person or a person with lived experience of disability. The screening program was entirely curated by people with disability and Deaf people. In all screenings, talks, panels and workshops the festival emphasised the voice and leadership of people with disability and Deaf people, ensuring integrity as the festival upheld the adage 'nothing about us without us'. Of the 18 speakers at the festival, 17 were people with a disability, demonstrating that the festival is a driving force in the campaign for disability leadership.

The festival then not only abided by, but exceeded the recommendations of the National Arts and Disability Strategy, the letter and spirit of the Disability Discrimination Act, and by the values of social justice articulated in the UN Declaration on the Rights of People with Disability.

## The Event

### Opening Night

The Opening Night took place in the beautiful setting of Experimedia at State Library Victoria, which was filled to maximum capacity with partners, funders, supporters and film lovers.

Breaking with tradition, The Other Film Festival hosted a provocative discussion panel 'Is Australian TV more diverse and inclusive than our screen industries?', moderated by Kath Duncan, featuring the festival guest Jules Dameron, a highly regarded filmmaker visiting from the US, CEO of Arts Access Australia Emma Bennison, actor Kate Hood, award-winning filmmaker Sofya Gollan and the Disability Discrimination Commissioner Alastair McEwin.

These panelists, with their collective diverse experiences, challenged the audience to stop endorsing the exploitation by film studios of people with disabilities and their stories. They also demanded authentic casting, consultation with people with disability, and integrity in stories featuring characters with disability.

This though provoking discussion had the full attention of the audience as the panel put the spotlight on diversity and portrayal of disability in Australian screen culture. Following the panel discussion was a short screening of highlights from the festival program.

The Opening Night reiterated the mission of The Other Film Festival; not only to screen outstanding films about the lived experience of disability, but also to reflect on how the screen industry in Victoria and Australia can become more diverse and inclusive.



Opening night panellists Sofya Gollan, Jules Dameron, Kath Duncan, Alastair McEwin, Emma Bennison and Kate Hood.  
Photo by Paul Dunn



## Venue

State Library Victoria was the festival venue partner in 2016, with the festival being hosted in the vibrant and centrally located Experimedia. The entrance to Experimedia is located in the main hub of the library, the Trescowthick Information Centre, so the festival information desk drew interest from library visitors, who went in to view screenings and talks. These visitors left feedback saying how much they enjoyed the program, with one such visitor who attended spontaneously saying:

**“I love that this event exists as it gives me an opportunity to experience diverse art forms and expression. Thank you for having this event!”**



Audience watching the 'I Am Woman, Hear Me Roar' Q & A. Photo by Piper Huynh

## Screening Program

The festival program featured compelling 32 films, including 10 short films made by local emerging filmmakers with disability. These films were selected from 157 submissions from 37 different countries, and featured a wide range of themes, showing the diversity globally of the lived experiences of people with disability, their families and friends.

As part of the screening program in 2016 a new session named 'Our World, Our Shorts' was launched. This session generated a high level of interest and excitement amongst filmmakers with disability and audience members, as it showcased short films made by filmmakers with lived experience of disability who reside in Australia. There were no constraints placed on the content that could be submitted, which means the films screened include stories without disability related themes; reflecting that the rich spectrum of these filmmakers' lives extend beyond their disability.

**The 'Our World, Our Shorts' session served as a powerful wedge in the commonly held expectation that filmmakers and artists with disability are limited to exclusively focusing on disability related themes. This expectation denies them the recognition as a whole of their diverse talents and experiences.**

The atmosphere in the session was buoyant as the audience loudly applauded all of the participating filmmakers. The audience listened intently to the introductions and Q & A with the participating filmmakers, with the filmmakers sharing their experiences as filmmakers in Victoria and Australia. This session was one of the most popular in the festival program, with people travelling from regional locations to attend this session.

This was a powerful opportunity for both leadership and engagement with talented and emerging film practitioners who have disability, as they were able to express themselves creatively using themes and content of their own choosing. This opened up exciting new dialogues with film practitioners and audience members about how people with disability can express their stories in a way that reflects the full breadth of their experience.

### **Festival Guest**

As in past years, The Other Film Festival succeeded in finding an outstanding festival guest. In 2016 we invited Jules Dameron, with the support of the US Embassy. Jules Dameron is a highly respected Deaf filmmaker in the US. Jules wholeheartedly, and with articulate charisma, shared her wide range of experience as a Deaf filmmaker with the audience. During her stay Jules facilitated a filmmaking workshop, delivered a presentation about authentic casting, participated in panel discussions and Q&A sessions during the festival and met with Deaf actors and Deaf filmmakers based in Melbourne.

One of the most popular festival sessions was a Q & A session that Jules participated in, 'I am Woman, Hear Me Roar', which featured a discussion with local Deaf actor Bethany Robinson about Deaf women in the film industry. The power imbalance prevalent in the screen industry was discussed, with an emphasis on the importance of the community and Deaf

women uniting to support each other in the industry, and prevent the constant appropriation by able-bodied directors of Deaf women and women with disability as two dimensional characters to signify a schema of vulnerability or 'otherness'.

A filmmaking workshop for young Deaf, hard of hearing and CODA people aged between 12 and 25 was delivered by Jules Dameron. The workshop was delivered with the assistance of two local facilitators, who are themselves Deaf filmmakers, Alexander Straub and Ramas Rentelis. The young participants produced and starred in an Auslan music video, with all participants taking on the production roles, including director, cinematographer and producer. After initial guidance and support from the workshop facilitators the young participants worked as a team independently to shoot and produce the music video.

One young participant, Kayla, shared her feedback about the workshop:

**“Jules was really inspiring because she has worked in many films and music videos (most of them I have seen and was really inspired by them). Jules is my role model and I really looked up to her”**

Dameron’s film reel showing some of her work can be seen at <http://julesdameron.com/>



Facilitator and participants at the Auslan Music Video workshop. Photo by Mija Gwyn



## Deaf Program

The Other Film Festival continued to develop the Deaf program in 2016, with two screening sessions centred on the experience of the Deaf community.

The program featured a number of speakers and panelists who are Deaf, including filmmakers Jules Dameron and Sofya Gollan, the Disability Discrimination Commissioner Alastair McEwin and actor Bethany Robinson.

The festival partnered with Vicdeaf to broaden the festival's reach with the Deaf community. Vicdeaf provided Auslan classes for festival volunteers and staff, in addition to 'Party Auslan Cards'; postcards featuring short signed phrases, which were distributed to festival guests. At the Opening Night two Auslan tutors mingled with festival guests, teaching them short Auslan phrases.

A new partnership was developed in 2016 with Turquoise iAuslan, a Deaf-led community group. Turquoise iAuslan members participated in the film selection process for the Deaf program, viewing the film submissions and curating the selection to ensure the screening program was an authentic reflection of the lived experience of the Deaf community.

A large percentage of the festival volunteers were students enrolled in the Melbourne Polytechnic Diploma of Auslan program. The festival was a unique and immersive experience for these students to develop their skills, gain real-life experience and vitally, participate in a disability-led major event where Deaf people and people with disability are empowered to curate their own stories and portrayals.



Bethany Robinson and Jules Dameron discussing a point in the 'I Am Woman, Hear Me Roar' session. Photo by Piper Huynh



## Touring screenings

In 2016 The Other Film Festival collaborated with Colac Otway Shire, with a touring screening event featuring four films from the festival program being hosted for International Day of People with Disability on Saturday 3 December.



Volunteer Emma in front of State Library Victoria. Photo by Paul Dunn

### **3. Access Services**

- The festival delivered exemplary standards of access; with:
- Auslan interpreters provided for all sessions
- Captioning and audio describing provided for each of the 32 films screened
- Live captioning and live audio description were provided for the opening night
- The venue was fully physically accessible, including the stage
- All festival screenings and events were free, to remove cost barriers
- The *Getting There* page included maps, links and comprehensive information covering train, tram, bus and parking
- Disability awareness training and briefings were provided by Arts Access Victoria's Industry Development Program for volunteers
- Volunteers were briefed to assist all guests including people with a disability.

### **4. Publicity & Media**

The Other Film Festival attracted interest from local media, with 16 unique mentions in print and on radio.

#### **Local coverage**

Beat Magazine, JOY 94.9 FM, 3CR, SYN FM and 3WBC

#### **Online coverage**

CBD News, Yooralla News, Geelong Region Arts Access, Vicdeaf, The Culture Trip, The Plus Ones, The Au Review and The Traveller Em

## 5. Acknowledgements

Thanks to Jules Dameron, Austin Andrews, Candy Mitchell, Madeline Getson, Dale Fairbairn, Gabrielle Connellan, Thara Krishna-Pillay, Andrew Taylor, Simon Abrahams, Xanthe Beesley, Abby Elisha, Delaney Hutchins, Alec Downs, Martin Curnow, Brent Phillips, Gill Victor, Sophie Sherriff, Pippa Samaya Ramas Rentelis, Alexander Straub, Catherine Miller, Akash Temple, Chloe Matthews, and to our amazing festival volunteers and Arts Access Victoria staff.



Festival volunteers. Photo by Paul Dunn

## Partners, Sponsors & Supporters

**The Other Film Festival is supported by the Australian Government.**

**Public Partners** City of Melbourne, Film Victoria and Screen Australia

**Festival Partners** Melbourne Fringe Festival, State Library Victoria and Twilight Cinemas

**Festival Supporters** US Embassy, Ericsson Australia, Vicdeaf, Word of Mouth Technology & Turquoise iAuslan

**Arts Access Victoria gratefully acknowledges the financial support of** Creative Victoria, Australia Council for the Arts, Department of Human Services