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ADG PROPOSES 50% QUOTA FOR WOMEN DIRECTORS

The Australian Directors Guild (ADG) has proposed a quota be set on Screen Australia Production Funding allocating 50% to projects directed by women.

The ADG has also called on state screen agencies and the ABC to support the initiative.

The ADG's President Ray Argall said today: "The screen industry has been funded by the Federal Government for more than four decades for reasons of cultural representation, economic stimulus, and professional development and innovation. Across all these criteria the current funding is not being shared in a representative way. The ADG is concerned with diversity of all types, but is particularly concerned with the dramatic lack of equity in the funding of women and, in particular, female directors."

Mr Argall said that figures revealing women's participation in key creative roles in Screen Australia-funded dramatic features across a 5-year average (2009-2014) are startling:

Directors 15%
Producers 32%
Writers 23%
Protagonists 28%

"The statistics are the starkest for dramatic feature films, but are inequitable across all forms of production supported by Screen Australia. The obstacles confronting women are complex and spread across all sections of the industry," Mr Argall said.

Director Gillian Armstrong agrees: "For years I have been asked about the lack of numbers of women directors in film. My feeling has always been that it has to be based on merit. But the data from Screen Australia shows that the increase has only been about 6 per cent in 30 years. It is pretty obvious that the current system is not about merit - THERE IS NOT A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD.

"Equally talented young women film makers are graduating from film schools in the same numbers as men, and winning short film awards, but they are not getting the breaks as film directors. It doesn't even make commercial sense, given that women are more than 50% of the audience. The same pattern is seen around the world. It is time to take action about this obvious gender inequality."

Mr Argall noted that screen agencies are not in themselves the cause of the inequity, but they are the centre from which change can be driven - as illustrated by the successful

action taken by national screen agencies in Sweden and the UK.

He said that a 50% quota would incentivize distributors and producers to consider more female directors.

“The focus on directors is because as creative drivers they can make a huge difference in redressing gender inequality in our industry - as the successful Swedish model has shown. In Sweden, setting a 50% quota for women directors resulted in jobs for women writers, actors, producers and other creatives, as well as for directors, rising dramatically across the board in the space of two years,” he said.

Director Phillip Noyce added: “Worldwide, the number of working female directors is disturbingly small compared to their male colleagues. In Australia, with significant funding from government agencies, we have the infrastructure in place to correct this inequality through decisive action from all funding bodies and the ABC.”

Alethea Jones, winner of Tropfest and awards at St Kilda Film Festival and Flickerfest, and currently working in the US directing an Amazon TV pilot on a gender initiated job sponsored by Amazon said: "Many of my friends have participated in positive discrimination workshops, that especially appealed for female applicants. These workshops allegedly guarantee jobs. I'm talking about the Warner Bros and the Fox Global Directors initiatives. But here's the thing - none of the girls are getting the jobs they were guaranteed. The boys, even the ones with less experience, are almost all in jobs with those studios.”

Gillian Armstrong continued: “The Swedish Film Institute Initiative has been an extraordinary success and we feel its program of targeted funding is a wonderful example. It’s the best way to incentivize the market to consider women. We are pleased to hear that Screen Australia is committed to addressing the problem here, and look forward to their response.”

On the ADG committee are directors working across all sectors of the Industry, from documentary and drama to online: Gillian Armstrong, Samantha Lang, Megan Simpson Huberman, Rebecca Barry, Michela Ledwidge, Anna Broinowski and Ray Argall President of the ADG who said, “Having balanced creative leadership in the making of our screen stories is a no brainer. To not use the full potential of our creative resources is a waste of the creative talents our women directors and creative practitioners have to offer our screen industry.”

Media enquiries: Tracey Mair, TM Publicity Ph: 0419 221 493 or 02 8333 9066