



MEDIA RELEASE

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Leah Purcell awarded the 2017 Sydney-UNESCO City of Film Award Presented by Director and Mentor Ray Lawrence at the Closing Night of the 64th Sydney Film Festival

Acclaimed Indigenous Australian director, writer and performer Leah Purcell has been awarded the 2017 Sydney-UNESCO City of Film Award.

The award was presented by Australian film director Ray Lawrence (*LANTANA*, *JINDABYNE*), who has been an important mentor throughout Leah's career, at the Closing Night of the 64th Sydney Film Festival last night.

The \$10,000 prize is awarded annually by Create NSW to an outstanding NSW-based screen practitioner whose work stands for innovation, imagination and impact.

Create NSW CEO Michael Brealey said: "Leah is a trailblazer in every sense and her extraordinary career only continues to grow in stature and range. She is one of our greatest talents and an inspiration to the creative community of NSW."

In addition to the cash prize, Leah will be offered the opportunity to take a desk at 'Charlie's', the hub for the Australian film-making community in Los Angeles, opened by Australians in Film, in partnership with Create NSW, AFTRS and Screen Queensland. 'Charlie's' offers a unique creative workspace in the historic Raleigh Studios in Hollywood, for Australian screen practitioners to conduct business, collaborate and network.

Mr Brealey noted that Leah has had a stellar year. Her adaptation of Henry Lawson's *The Drover's Wife*, in which she also starred at Sydney's Belvoir Theatre, won the Nick Enright Prize for Playwriting and was the first play to ever win the Book of the Year prize at the 2017 NSW Premier's Literary Awards, in addition to taking the Victorian Prize for Literature earlier in the year. This year she was nominated for an Australian Directors' Guild Award for her work directing *CLEVERMAN*, and has also directed episodes of the TV series *THE SECRET DAUGHTER* and *REDFERN NOW*.

In 2016 her script for ABC3's *READY FOR THIS* episode 'The Birthday Party' won the AWGIE for Best Children's Television Script, and was also nominated for a 2016 International Emmy for Children's TV Drama Series. In 2012 Leah directed and starred in the short film, *SHE SAY*, which had its world premiere at Sydney Film Festival and in 2009 she was nominated for the IF Directors Award for her short film, *AUNTY MAGGIE AND THE WOMBA WAKGUN*. Prior to this, Leah's *BLACK CHICKS TALKING* won the 2001 IF Best Documentary Award and was selected in-competition at the inaugural Tribeca Film Festival in 2002.

Leah is one of Australia's most acclaimed screen actors with standout performances in films such as *LAST CAB TO DARWIN*, *LANTANA*, *JINDABYNE*, *SOMERSAULT* and *THE PROPOSITION* and in numerous television series including *BLACK COMEDY*, *JANET KING*, *LOVE CHILD*, *HOUSE OF HANCOCK*, *LOVE MY WAY*, *POLICE RESCUE* and *THE STARTER WIFE*.

She is also highly regarded as a theatre director and performer. In 2007 she won the Helpmann Award for Best Female Actor in a Stageplay for *The Story of the Miracles at Cookie's Table* and in 2009 she performed off-West End at the Almeida Theatre in London in Andrew Bovell's *When the Rain Stops Falling*. She has since gone onto direct other theatre such as *Stolen*, *Howie the Rookie*, *Brothers Wreck*, *Don't Take Your Love to Town* and *Radiance*. In 1997, she co-wrote *Box the Pony* which was the smash hit of the 1997 Festival of the Dreaming and has played to sell-out seasons at the Belvoir Theatre, the Sydney Opera House, the 1999 Edinburgh Festival and a season at the Barbican Theatre in London for BITE: 2000. The published text of the play won the 1999 NSW Premier's Literary Award and the 2000 Queensland Premier's Literary Award for Best Play.

For information about Create NSW visit www.create.nsw.gov.au

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