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Margaret Pomeranz announced among new Board Members for AACTA in line with long-term strategy

With a growing screen culture and industry development program at the heart of its five-year strategic plan, the Australian Film Institute | Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AFI | AACTA) has announced a number of new board appointments in line with its long-term strategy.

Margaret Pomeranz AM, one of Australia's most iconic film critics and long-time champion of Australian screen, is one of three new board members. Ms Pomeranz will assist in further expanding AFI | AACTA's member program, which now offers ten streams of programming at year-round events, open to the public and industry.

Ms Pomeranz's career spans almost 30 years both behind and on camera, most notably producing and co-hosting **THE MOVIE SHOW** (SBS) and **AT THE MOVIES** (ABC). Despite retiring from **AT THE MOVIES** along with co-host David Stratton last year, Ms Pomeranz signed with Foxtel this year to take up her role on Foxtel Movies Masterpiece channel for her program **MARGARET POMERANZ PRESENTS** and as co-host of **SCREEN**, a weekly program on the Foxtel Arts channel with Graeme Blundell.

Ms Pomeranz has a long association with AFI | AACTA. In addition to co-producing the broadcast of the AFI Awards for SBS in the 1980s, she has hosted special telecasts from the AFI Awards and has presented at the AFI and AACTA Awards.

Former NSW Minister for Tourism, Major Events and the Arts, **the Hon George Souris**, has also joined the AFI | AACTA board. Mr Souris has a strong association with the AACTA Awards, having represented the NSW Government at the Awards when serving as Minister, following the launch of AACTA and the move of the former AFI Awards from Melbourne to Sydney.

Intellectual property and commercial law specialist **Tony Petani** has joined the board, having advised AFI | AACTA for a number of years. Mr Petani has also worked on several Australian screen productions.

AFI | AACTA CEO, **Damian Trehwella**, said the new directors joined the board at an exciting time, focusing on the key pillars of the organisation's five-year plan.

'In addition to growing our member base, and pursuing new support from corporate, private and government avenues, another key priority is to leverage the opportunities presented by the new Seven West partnership, which also aligns with our plans to grow the success of the AACTA Awards in Sydney. Further developing our International Engagement Program in North America is also a focus, following the 4th AACTA International Awards held in collaboration with G'Day USA in LA earlier this year.'

Mr Trehwella said AFI | AACTA has undergone significant development within the last 12 months, particularly the expansion of its year-round screen culture and industry development program.

The year-round program will continue to be delivered with partner Event Cinemas Bondi Junction in Sydney, where thousands of members have enjoyed Q&As, masterclasses and screenings, along with networking and collaborating at the Cinema's AACTA Bar. The year-round program in Melbourne recently moved to Cinema Nova as a result of a new partnership and growing demand, already attracting new members as a result of the cinema's dedicated screen enthusiasts and appetite for cast and crew panel discussions.

'Brand new member program streams include our new Masterclass Series, with Andrew Knight having just delivered our inaugural screenwriting masterclass, and our Premiere Television Showcase stream. This stream means we now hold exclusive cinema screenings of Australian television programs with cast and crew Q&As prior to their small screen debuts. Our **DEADLINE GALLIPOLI** and **REDFERN NOW THE TELEMOTION** screenings were hugely popular, and another television premiere, **GLITCH**, is scheduled for July.

'Already this year our new programming has attracted more than 3,000 members to screenings and events in Sydney and Melbourne, held with 28 filmmakers and practitioners taking part in our Q&As. The public in particular is embracing the opportunity to see Australian productions and hear firsthand from the industry at our events, and more than 50 events are scheduled between now and December. This is in addition to our Meet the Makers – Nominees events, which were held with each of the guilds earlier this year, attracting more than 500 attendees. We look forward to delivering these events again in Sydney for the public and industry ahead of the 5th AACTA Awards,' Mr Trehwella said.

AFI | AACTA Chair, **Alan Finney**, said new and existing board members will be instrumental to the organisation's growth and development.

'With screen culture again a key focus for AFI | AACTA, this is the perfect timing for one of our nation's most staunch supporters of Australian screen, Margaret Pomeranz, to join our board. Margaret is much-loved and respected by the public and industry, and her passion and knowledge has influenced us all.

'Having served as a minister and MP for nearly three decades, including for a period as tourism minister, George Souris brings a wealth of political and business acumen, expertise and contacts to AFI | AACTA, and will help drive our long-term vision across a number of pillars, including visitation to Sydney for our flagship event, the AACTA Awards Ceremony.

'Tony Petani is a long-term advisor to the organisation, and his passion for and experience in making Australian screen productions is an asset to our board,' Mr Finney said.

Speaking of her appointment to the AFI | AACTA Board, **Margaret Pomeranz** said: 'I think my obvious passion for cinema generally and especially Australian films has been enhanced over the years by the AFI. The opportunity to see all the films in production in this country over a year, the opportunity to discuss our cinema has been an important element for many of us who have watched with gratification the enormous talent that this country produces, year after year. I'm very honoured to be asked to join the Board of AFI | AACTA, and I look forward to being able to contribute to the enhancement and celebration of this wonderful art form.'

George Souris said he hoped he could bring his experience in the Tourism, Major Events and Arts portfolios in government to bear in assisting AACTA fulfil its objective of enhancing the screen industry and running the annual Awards in the calibre of the BAFTAs and Oscars and to showcase the depth of screen culture and talent here in Australia.

Tony Petani said he is looking forward to assisting AFI | AACTA in its aims of building a strong and prosperous film and television industry and screen culture in Australia. 'A strong screen culture is vital not just to the Australian industry, but to the entire community. I am proud to be part of an organisation committed to celebrating and developing an industry critical to the telling of our stories,' Mr Petani said.

Mr Finney also thanked exiting board members.

'Of course welcoming new board members means farewelling others, and I thank Mike Beard, Ian Sutherland, Alaric McAusland, Russel Howcroft and Geoff Brown for their considerable input and commitment over the past few years.

'I also thank our long-standing board members for their tireless work, and our new and ongoing members for their support. This support allows us to continue to grow our member program, and we hope to be in a position to roll this out nationally in the future,' Mr Finney said.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Member Program: Information about the [ten streams of programming](#) delivered within AFI | AACTA's screen culture and industry development member program can be found here. Details of upcoming member events, open to the public and industry, can be found [here](#). Membership is open to the public and screen industry professionals and practitioners – more [here](#).

AFI | AACTA Board: A full list of board members can be found [here](#).

About AFI | AACTA: The AACTA Awards (a continuum of the AFI Awards) are the Australian screen industry's "stamp of success" – the Australian equivalent of the Oscars and the BAFTAs. The AACTA Awards, held annually in Sydney, recognise excellence across film, television, documentary and short film in more than 40 categories. In addition to the AACTA Awards, AFI | AACTA's core remit is to promote Australian screen culture. AFI | AACTA fulfils this remit by delivering a year-round industry development and screen culture program for members – connecting screen fans and enthusiasts with screen professionals, and the fantastic screen content that Australia produces. AFI membership is open to all. AACTA membership is open to accredited screen professionals.

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