

MEDIA RELEASE

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**FILM VICTORIA CEO THANKS AND FAREWELLS THE INDUSTRY
AFTER NINE YEARS AT THE HELM**

Sandra Sdraulig's departure brings well wishes from local and international practitioners

After almost nine years leading Film Victoria Sandra Sdraulig is saying thank you, congratulations and farewell to the industry in her final week as CEO of the organisation.

"Working at Film Victoria and with Victoria's outstanding screen practitioners has been a privilege and a pleasure," Sandra said. For me this week is not about my farewell - it's about thanking the industry for their passion, hard work and creative force, and for allowing me to support and be a part of their amazing achievements over the past nine years."

"Though it's with sadness that I leave my Film Victoria colleagues, I also feel great pride and confidence, knowing the organisation is on a solid path for the future."

John Howie, Film Victoria President; Sigrid Thornton, actor and former Film Victoria Board member; and David Parker, producer all agreed that Ms Sdraulig had reinvigorated the industry since her appointment in 2002.

"Sandra has played an instrumental part in transforming the Victorian film, television and digital media industry, which under her leadership has increased yearly output from below \$90 million per annum to record-high achievements above \$260 million per annum," said Mr Howie.

"Film Victoria is now recognised nationally for its innovative, forward-looking programs and initiatives and industry-first events. It is respected internationally for its world-class film commission services."

Ms Thornton said Sandra and Film Victoria should be applauded for their terrific achievements in bringing enormous economic and cultural benefits to the state. "Sandra has set goals and achieved them, with a growing development slate alongside significantly increasing local and offshore production. This was all achieved in a highly competitive environment and it was done with efficiency, integrity and a large dose of charm."

Mr Parker said it had been a joy to have a savvy, forward thinking, intelligent CEO steering the Victorian industry to its present strong position. "It's rare to find a person who can work with government to create a climate and a budget that allows we film makers to do just that - make films. Sandra leaves Film Victoria at a time when her past work has cemented a solid foundation for our future industry."

Under Sandra's leadership, Film Victoria has developed and delivered benchmark programs, initiatives and events. The organisation was the first state screen agency to offer a program dedicated to TV production, which transformed the sector from critically low levels of production to the flourishing industry it is today.

Film Victoria was also the first to develop programs focusing on companies developing slates as well as individual projects, and brought the *Enterprise* program to Australia to strengthen Victorian screen businesses and partnerships.

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Film Victoria adopted a new and different approach to script development, offering holistic support to writers from treatment stage through to production, to create an environment which encouraged writers to produce their best work and build the overall skills base. Critical to this was bringing the *Arista* series of workshops and lectures to Australia for the first time.

The agency has led the way in digital media, recognising opportunities, embracing new technology and creating the most innovative programs of any state or federal agency to support the sector. Victoria is now Australia's strongest games sector, employing more than 400 fulltime developers in 44 studios.

The organisation was also the first state screen agency to establish a dedicated industry research and analysis unit.

Under Sandra's guidance Film Victoria has positioned Melbourne as an important production destination globally, securing unprecedented levels of international production for the state. Film Victoria secured the largest television series ever made in the world, *The Pacific*, which generated around \$180 million for Victoria's economy.

THE PACIFIC producer Tony To described Sandra's assistance in bringing the acclaimed HBO series to Victoria as invaluable.

"In the context of significant competition, Sandra and Film Victoria were critical in convincing us to locate our entire production in Melbourne. Sandra introduced us to some of the best crews I have ever worked with, and we had access to world-class facilities. Sandra and Film Victoria provide film commission services at the highest level, and supported us in practical ways throughout the production."

Other international projects secured for Victoria during Sandra's term include WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE, CHARLOTTE'S WEB, GHOST RIDER, KNOWING and DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK.

Jordan Kerner, producer of CHARLOTTE'S WEB, said it was his contact with Sandra that proved to be the decisive factor in the decision to shoot the film in Australia. "Sandra is an immense creative force, an amazing collaborator, and a great proponent of the Australian film industry. The cooperation and intelligent assistance we received from her was outstanding."

Producer Gary Foster said working with Sandra to film GHOST RIDER in Melbourne had been a pleasure. "Her attention to detail, her willingness to advocate on our behalf with government, and her personal commitment to make the film a successful experience in Melbourne was outstanding."

During Sandra's term, total Victorian screen industry production expenditure has topped \$1.5 billion dollars. Film Victoria's programs and initiatives have leveraged more than \$1 billion of this spend.

Reflecting on her nine years at Film Victoria, Sandra said, "I leave knowing the industry is in great shape, and ready to respond to all the changes, challenges and opportunities ahead. We have a tremendous depth of talent and experience in this state, which I know will keep Victoria at the forefront of producing great content that is successful in being recognised locally and internationally."

Sandra thanked John Howie, the Film Victoria Board and staff and the Victorian Government for their support during her term as CEO.

She departs Film Victoria on Friday, 25 March 2011.