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**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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## **Free TV supports young Australian drama talent**

Free TV Australia today reaffirmed its commitment to nurturing young talent for Australia's television, film and theatre industry with its \$30,000 annual award to support students of the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA).

For nearly 30 years the Free TV networks have helped young Australian actors, directors, production designers, set builders and costume designers through an annual scholarship to assist NIDA students with their living costs.

Now called the Bruce Gyngell scholarship - after one of the luminaries of the Australian television industry - the award was set up by the commercial television networks in 1977. Since then, more than \$500,000 has been given to over 200 students.

Tomorrow NIDA and Free TV Australia will celebrate their long association with a special lunch in Sydney to be attended by actors Susie Porter and Heather Mitchell as well as some of the previous recipients of the award including Russell Smith, David Lyons and Anne Tenney. One of the current scholarship recipients will also attend the celebration.

Free TV Australia chairman, Grant Blackley, says the commercial free-to-air television networks are proud to assist up and coming talent through the intense period of training provided by the National Institute for Dramatic Art.

"The Free TV networks are the major underwriters of local film and TV drama production and this scholarship is just another way we are backing the industry."

Mr Blackley says a portion of the annual scholarship is designated for students of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island or non-English speaking backgrounds.

"Bruce Gyngell believed that the best way to ensure multicultural Australia was reflected on the screen was to ensure that actors from minority backgrounds received professional training. The Bruce Gyngell scholarship supports this goal."

NIDA General Manager Elizabeth Butcher says NIDA's association with Free TV has been a long and extremely rewarding one. "We are so grateful to everyone at Free TV for continuing to support our students, many of whom have gone on to achieve significant success in our industry. Free TV should be enormously proud of their contribution to nurturing Australia's talent, and NIDA is delighted to honour that contribution."

**For media enquiries, please contact  
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Photographs will be available after the event.**