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Young people's program provides new spark for BIFF

A new film festival program aimed at young people will be a major part of the expanded 14th Brisbane International Film Festival (BIFF) this year, Minister for the Arts Anna Bligh said today.

Ms Bligh said the Queensland Government would invest an extra \$325,000 a year for the next three years to expand BIFF's existing children's film festival program and relocate the festival to South Bank.

Cine Sparks – The Australian Film Festival for Young People will expand the traditional boundaries of film to incorporate all aspects of visual communication, including television, gaming, computer and telephone-based media.

The Australian Children's Film Festival has been part of BIFF since 2002, but this year the program is being expanded and re-branded to appeal to young people aged nine to 18 years.

Ms Bligh said the expansion of the young people's film festival coincided with BIFF's relocation to the South Bank precinct, which would transform the festival into a more publicly accessible event.

"A component of this year's festival program will continue to be shown at the Hoyts Regent Cinemas in the Queen Street Mall, BIFF's home for the past 11 years, however the majority of films and festival activities will be at Southbank Cinemas and the surrounding South Bank precinct," Ms Bligh said.

"The relocation provides fantastic opportunities to link with other organisations and events that are part of the South Bank community, such as the Griffith University Film School and the Queensland Music Festival.

"As part of making the festival more accessible, there will be a public program of free screenings in the Suncorp Piazza during BIFF, including a number of classic and cult films, as well as family films presented as part of Cine Sparks."

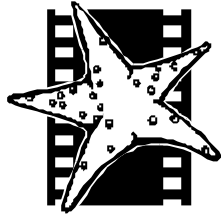
Ms Bligh said it was expected Cine Sparks would attract about 10,000 young people to the festival this year.

"The festival program will be aimed mostly at school groups and will support existing Education Queensland curriculum, but there will also be activities for families," she said.

The Cine Sparks program will be sourced from throughout the world and will provide a counter-balance to the mainstream films currently available in cinemas for young people.

Ms Bligh said the expansion of the young people's program was an opportunity to educate children and young people about visual media and its significance in today's society.

"We live in an age where visual media and technologies are becoming increasingly important in our day-to-day lives," she said. "If we are to stay at the forefront of these technologies, it is essential we



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provide young people with the skills to understand the media, critically analyse it and produce their own.”

Feature films already secured for Cine Sparks have been sourced from Japan, Iran, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands and Spain. Supporting the feature films will be a number of short films, including many produced by children, along with a special selection of Queensland films entered into the recent Warner Roadshow Studios Queensland New Filmmaker Awards.

A range of practical activities will also be held during the festival, such as seminars, discussion, guest filmmaker interviews and hands-on experience with visual content creation. International guest directors will introduce their films and participate in question and answer sessions with audiences.

There will be no charge for children and young adults to attend the film screenings, although school groups will need to book in advance.

Teachers will be provided with a range of additional materials to support the screening and workshop program and a dedicated website will provide opportunities for young people to participate in the program, even if they are unable to attend the screenings, through discussion groups and forums linked to the program.

Ms Bligh said the festival would be further expanded by 2007 to include more film sessions of young audiences, online presentations, strong linkages with Education Queensland programs and curricula, and both metropolitan and regional events.

“It is anticipated that by 2007 the program will attract up to 20,000 young people each year, with the opportunity for upwards of a further 50,000 to participate via online and outreach programs,” she said.

As well as the new Cine Sparks program and relocation to South Bank, organisers have also changed the start and end days of BIFF and the festival has a new presenting sponsor.

BIFF will be held from July 27 to August 8, with the festival now concluding on a Monday to allow audiences more viewing time on the last Sunday than in previous years.

The new presenting sponsor for the 2004 festival is Austcorp Group Limited’s \$700 million residential, commercial, retail and tourism tower, Vision. Vision has a three-year presenting sponsorship with BIFF.

The official program of this year’s festival will be announced in early July.

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