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MEDIA RELEASE

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GLAAD VISIT TO SYDNEY TO HIGHLIGHT LGBTIQ REPRESENTATION IN MEDIA

MEDIA ROUNDTABLE AIMS TO IMPROVE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF LGBTIQ IMAGES AND STORYLINES IN AUSTRALIA

Author and journalist Benjamin Law (*The Family Law*), and comedian Jordan Raskopoulos (*Axis of Awesome*), will join leading international LGBTIQ* media advocates in Sydney later this month for a groundbreaking public discussion on the power of news and entertainment media to fast track the social inclusion of LGBTIQ people in Australia.

Screen NSW, Queer Screen and NSW LGBTI health organisation ACON have teamed up with Foxtel and the Australian Film TV and Radio School (AFTRS) to bring to this year's Mardi Gras Film Festival two directors of GLAAD, the influential US-based non-profit agency that works to ensure LGBTIQ people are represented fairly and inclusively in the media.

Titled *In Conversation with GLAAD: Accelerating LGBTIQ Acceptance Through the Media*, the free 90 minute forum is a first for Australia and a highlight of the film festival program. Radio and television presenter Fenella Kernebone (TedXSydney) will MC the event.

Mardi Gras Film Festival Director Paul Struthers said the event will be entertaining as well as informative: "GLAAD is highly influential in the media sector in the US, particularly in Hollywood where each year the organisation hosts the high profile GLAAD Media Awards.

"This is the first time GLAAD has visited Australia and this special community forum provides a fascinating opportunity for us to go behind the scenes and find out how GLAAD works with filmmakers, TV producers, journalists, other media creatives to give LGBTIQ people a fair go on the page and the screen. Benjamin, Jordan and Fenella will help explore the Australian context and how we can improve our own local practice."

"America's biggest cultural export is our media, meaning that the representations that are created in Hollywood are seen in Australia and around the world," said Ross Murray, GLAAD's Director of Programs, Global and US South. "Visibility and accuracy matters when it comes to LGBTIQ people, especially at this crucial time in Australia and the US. We are coming to listen and learn, as well as share what we've learned through over 30 years of media advocacy."



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The two GLAAD directors – Ross Murray and Ray Bradford – will also be special guests at a high level media industry roundtable in Sydney with senior executives from Australia’s print, radio, TV, digital media and screen production industries. Supported by Foxtel and AFTRS, the roundtable aims to brief decision makers in the media about the business benefits of LGBTIQ-inclusive content and programming.

Grainne Brunson, Head of Strategy and Industry Development at Screen NSW said the issue has both commercial and cultural implications: “Embracing diversity has many benefits for content producers and we’re delighted to be working with our community and industry partners to help improve the representation of LGBTIQ people across the full media spectrum with these special GLAAD events.”

ACON CEO Nicolas Parkhill said the issue also has health related implications: “Whether it’s on the street, in the workplace, or on the screen, bias, discrimination and exclusion have a range of negative impacts on the mental health of LGBTI people. We hope these events with GLAAD will help address this issue.”

Ross Murray is GLAAD’s Director of Programs focusing on LGBTIQ people in the US South, and advocates across the globe, with a particular interest in LGBTIQ and faith communities. As Director of Programs for Entertainment Media, Ray Bradford works with creators across all entertainment platforms, as well as allies, to promote fair, accurate and inclusive content that accelerates acceptance of LGBTIQ lives.

The free event, *In Conversation with GLAAD: Accelerating LGBTIQ Acceptance Through The Media*, will be held at Giant Dwarf Theatre, 199 Cleveland St, Redfern on Tuesday February 28 at 6.30pm. Seating is limited so bookings are essential:
www.tix.queerscreen.org.au

ENDS | *LGBTIQ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer

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