

MULTICULTURAL FILM FESTIVAL 2026



Celebrating Refugee Week

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SPOTLIGHT ON REFUGEE WEEK: A MILLION STORIES

The Multicultural Film Festival (MFF) continues to celebrate short films exploring multiculturalism and cultural identities, aligning with Refugee Week from 14 – 20 June. As part of this celebration, the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) proudly introduced the Chairperson's Refugee Stories Award last year, recognising compelling storytelling by and about people with lived refugee experiences.

Refugee Week is a time to honour the journeys of those who have sought safety and a new beginning in Australia. It is also a chance for all Victorians to acknowledge the richness that refugees bring to our cultural tapestry through their lived experiences, creativity and contributions.

This year's theme for Refugee Week is 'A Million Stories'. This reflects on the milestone of Australia welcoming one million refugees since World War II. We're proud to align MFF with Refugee Week, providing a platform for diverse narratives to be celebrated on the big screen.

During Refugee Week, we gather not just to watch films, but to witness lives – a million stories, each deserving to be seen. By sharing these stories, we deepen our understanding, foster empathy and build stronger, more inclusive communities.



A Million Stories
14–20 June 2026



refugeeweek.org.au | [#RefugeeWeekAU](https://twitter.com/RefugeeWeekAU)





ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS

FORMALITIES COMMENCE

Performance

by Ajak Kwai

Master of Ceremonies Welcome

by Helen Kapalos

Welcome to Country

by Wurundjeri Land Council

Minister for Creative Industries Address

by Hon. Vicki Ward

VMC Chairperson Address

by Vivienne Nguyen AM

Swinburne University Vice-President, External Engagement Address

by Bronte Neyland

SBS Head of Creative Diversity Address

by Michelle Cheng

Performance

by Ashur Folkloric Dance Group

PREMIERE SCREENING

of short films from the Official Selection

AWARD PRESENTATIONS

Best Victorian Short Fiction Film

sponsored by Swinburne University of Technology

Best Victorian Short Non-Fiction Film

sponsored by The Bruce Wong Foundation

Best National Short Film

sponsored by SBS

Chairperson's Refugee Stories Award

sponsored by the Victorian Multicultural Commission

People's Choice Award for Best Short Film

sponsored by Segmento

EVENT CONCLUDES

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER FOR MULTICULTURAL AND MULTIFAITH VICTORIA



Welcome to the premiere of the Multicultural Film Festival 2026!

The Victorian Multicultural Commission, in partnership with Swinburne University of Technology and SBS, has curated an engaging program sure to enlighten and captivate audiences.

It is particularly fitting the MFF 2026 premieres during Refugee Week under its theme of *'A Million Stories'*.

Film has the powerful ability to bring experiences to life through storytelling, and this unique festival celebrates cinema from multicultural perspectives, offering insights and inspiration on the challenges that accompany migration and the lived experience of people from diverse backgrounds.

Your stories are a reflection of what it means to live in a multicultural Victoria.

The festival champions the contributions of Australians from multicultural and multifaith backgrounds – as well as migrants, refugees and asylum seekers from around the world – elevating underrepresented voices, supporting career pathways, and showcasing narratives through a dedicated cultural lens.

Congratulations to all the filmmakers in the Official Selection, whether you are beginning your career or established in the industry.

By sharing your stories through the medium of film, you foster intercultural understanding and create a space for connection and conversation that will resonate with audiences across Victoria and far beyond.

Enjoy the festival!

Ingrid Stitt MP

Minister for Multicultural and Multifaith Victoria

MESSAGE FROM THE VICTORIAN MULTICULTURAL COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON



Presenting the premiere screening of the 2026 Multicultural Film Festival, a leading initiative of the Victorian Multicultural Commission.

Tonight, we honour the experiences and creativity of local, international and culturally diverse filmmakers. We thank Swinburne University of Technology for their significant support delivering the 2026 MFF with the VMC.

We are thrilled to continue collaborating with our valued sponsors – SBS, Yarra Trams, Swinburne University of Technology, Segmento, Department of Transport and Planning, Foot Solutions, John Stonemart Pty Ltd, LanguageLoop, Think HQ, Victorian Electoral Commission, Bunjil Place, Channel 31, Federation Square, Leba, Mornington Peninsula Shire, Northern Grampians Shire Council, RMIT University, S&J Media Group, SAE University College and The University of Melbourne.

These partnerships have made our festival into the powerful platform it has become, uplifting voices from many diverse communities here in Victoria and around the world.

The MFF is a platform for diverse filmmakers to gain exposure and growth opportunities at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), Australia's home of screen culture. By promoting a range of filmmakers and styles, and introducing audiences to diversity, the MFF amplifies stories of resilience, creativity and hope. A special thank you to SBS for broadcasting the festival on SBS Demand for even further reach.

I wish to congratulate all filmmakers, from the 767 submissions we received, for their contributions and efforts. We are delighted each year by the amount of creativity our festival showcases. We are proud to premiere these stories during Refugee Week and deliver a Victorian tour for both metropolitan and regional audiences to enjoy.

Refugee Week asks us to listen. The MFF answers with a million stories worth hearing.

Vivienne Nguyen AM

Chairperson, Victorian Multicultural Commission

MESSAGE FROM SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY



Swinburne's Departments of Film, Games and Animation, and Humanities and Social Sciences are delighted to once again partner with the Victorian Multicultural Commission for the 2026 Multicultural Film Festival.

This year's films capture a vibrant creative energy among filmmakers engaging with questions of social inclusion, identity, and cultural diversity in challenging times, offering a compelling and insightful portrait of Australia's evolving multiculturalism.

We thank the Victorian Multicultural Commission for its foresight and generosity in supporting the research that underpins the festival. This year, our focus is the *Reel Change Film Café* project, which draws on film's unique capacity to prompt reflection and foster empathy as part of an innovative anti-racism strategy.

We note with deep sadness the passing of Dr Atalanti Dionysus, who, as Project Manager, brought the festival to the screen for many years. We dedicate the 2026 Multicultural Film Festival to her memory.

Dr Vincent Giarrusso

Lecturer, Department of Film, Games and Animation

Vincent is an award-winning musician, filmmaker, and academic. His creative practice, teaching and research is underpinned by an emphasis on social cohesion and cultural issues.

Dr Glenda Ballantyne

Senior Lecturer, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Glenda is a sociologist passionate about innovative, interdisciplinary research that explores multiculturalism and fosters intercultural dialogue, connection.

Atlanta Treloar

2026 Multicultural Film Festival Program Manager

Atlanta is a Post Producer, Post Supervisor and VFX Producer who has worked across feature development and series animation in Los Angeles and now specialises in scripted film and television in Melbourne.

FRIENDS OF THE MULTICULTURAL FILM FESTIVAL

The VMC has partnered with a network of experienced filmmakers and industry professionals who have become Friends of the MFF. These passionate advocates are committed to championing diverse storytelling and supporting the next generation of emerging talent across Australia's vibrant screen industry.



Atong Atem – Artist and writer

Atong Atem is a South Sudanese artist and writer from Bor living in Narrm Melbourne. Her work explores postcolonial practices in the diaspora primarily working with photography and video.



Helen Kapalos – Journalist and former VMC Chairperson

Appointed as the VMC's Chairperson, from 2015 to 2019, Helen Kapalos is one of Australia's most respected broadcasters, a seasoned communications leader and an award-winning documentary filmmaker.



John Safran – Writer and filmmaker

John Safran is known for his bold explorations of culture, faith, and society. He has won numerous awards for his impactful documentaries, and TV series. His latest book is *Squat: A Week Squatting at Kanye's Mansion*.



Josh Piterman – Performer and author

Josh Piterman is the author of *Behind the Mask* and the only Australian to play both the roles of Jean Valjean in *Les Misérables* and The Phantom in the brilliant original production of *The Phantom of the Opera* on London's West End.



Ra Chapman – Creator, writer and actor

Ra Chapman is a Korean-Australian writer and actor whose work spans film, television, and theatre. Ra garnered a 2025 Australian Writers Guild (AWGIE) Award nomination for her TV comedy series *White Fever*.



Tig Terera – Writer and director

Born in Zimbabwe and raised in Australia, Tig Terera's debut TV series, *SWIFT STREET*, which he created, wrote and directed (episodes 1-4), was funded by SBS and Magpie Pictures.

AWARDS CATEGORIES

BEST VICTORIAN SHORT FICTION FILM

sponsored by Swinburne University of Technology

Short fiction films created by Victorian producers, directors, writers or actors.

BEST VICTORIAN SHORT NON-FICTION FILM

sponsored by The Bruce Wong Foundation

Short non-fiction films (e.g., documentaries) created by Victorian producers, directors, writers or actors.

BEST NATIONAL SHORT FILM

sponsored by SBS

Short films from across Australia in any genre (fiction, non-fiction, animation, music video, or other).

CHAIRPERSON'S REFUGEE STORIES AWARD

sponsored by the Victorian Multicultural Commission

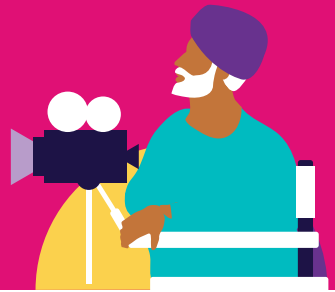
Short films addressing refugee or asylum seeker experiences in any genre (fiction, non-fiction, animation, music video, or other).

PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD FOR BEST SHORT FILM

sponsored by Segmento

To be chosen by the audience via live voting at the premiere screening and selected from the Official Selection.

SELECTION PANEL



Dr Adrian Danks

Associate Professor, Cinema Studies and Media, RMIT University

Dr Glenda Ballantyne

Senior Lecturer, Sociology, Swinburne University of Technology

Helen Kapalos

Documentary filmmaker and former VMC Chairperson

Jessie Robson

Manager Policy and Community Engagement,
Victorian Multicultural Commission

Matthew Keisoglu

Director and Founder, The Multicultural Mental Health Film Festival

Michelle Cheng

Head of Creative Diversity, SBS

Nikki Vu

VPS Women of Colour Network Committee Member

Ra Chapman

Writer, Actor and Friend of the MFF

Dr Vincent Giarrusso

Lecturer, Department of Film, Games and Animation,
Swinburne University of Technology

Vivienne Nguyen AM

Chairperson, Victorian Multicultural Commission

OFFICIAL SELECTION



EVERYONE GETS BORED OF EVERYTHING

Directed and written by:

Andrea Mudbidri

Produced by: Andrea Mudbidri
and Juliet Lochrin

Key cast: Andrea Mudbidri, Julianna
Caballero, Juan Bianchi, Mason
Phoumirath and Rosanna Spiers

State: New South Wales

Country: Australia

This exuberant slice-of-life dramedy follows a young girl who loses her job, prompting a day of mundane and surprisingly deep conversations. She learns to celebrate her heritage, appreciate her family's quirks, and finds solace in the familiar amid life's unpredictable twists and turns. An ode to Latino resilience, growth and the importance of familial love and support.



FROM NO VOICE TO BIG VOICE

Directed and written by: Deng Achieu

Produced by: Jesse Matthew

Key cast: Debra (Yar Majok)
John and The Hon. Ayor Makur Chuot

State: Victoria

Country: Australia

This powerful film follows Deborah, a young Sudanese woman who has escaped the fate of more than 50 percent of Sudanese girls sold into prearranged marriages. The film traces her journey as she carves out her own destiny as a criminal lawyer and proud mother. Juxtaposed against the story of the Hon Ayor Makur Chuot MLC, the first South Sudanese woman admitted into the Australian Parliament.



HUÍ JIĀ

Directed by: Alex Nestic
Produced by: Alex Nestic and
Madison Murphy
Written by: Alex Nestic,
Renge Chen and Dennis Li
Key cast: Lili Bai
State: Victoria
Country: Australia

An aging restaurant owner reflects on an old letter she once sent to her father in her homeland. This film explores fractured memories of home, identity and migration, highlighting the weight of what has been lost and what remains.



I CAME FROM THERE

Directed by: Abhishek Singh
Written by: Sargon Boulus
Produced by: Masar Smari
Key cast: Masar Smari and
El Sarafandi
Country: Iraq

A poetic documentary based on the Arabic poem of Sargon Boulus. This film explores alienation and reconciliation. A dedication to exiles both inside and outside their homelands.



MAKSYM & MILANA

Directed and written by:

Students from C.E.I.P. Serrería School

Produced by: C.E.I.P. Serrería School

Key cast: Students from C.E.I.P.

Serrería School

State: Valencia

Country: Spain

Told through the eyes of children, this charming narrative tells the story of Maksym, a 10-year-old Ukrainian boy, who flees the war arrives in Valencia and meets a Russian girl named Milana.



SQUATA LOCKS

Directed by: Jeremiah Puni

Written by: Annidette Puni

Produced by: Chhayly Moek

Key cast: Lucy Dunning and Paul Talbot

State: New South Wales

Country: Australia

This confronting film explores the timely issue of secondary homelessness that affects young women. Tali, a student, secretly lives out of her car. She encounters a recently divorced security guard - and both their lives are changed forever.



TABBEH

Directed and written by:

Sarah Ghassali

Produced by: Grace Hird

Key cast: Mira Fares and

Cedra Barrini

State: Victoria

Country: Australia

A narrative exploring memory and friendship, as best friends catch up over two cups of chai to play a round of Tabbeh. Pushing the limits of Arabic storytelling, the film celebrates childhood, innocence the power of play.



THE SUN COMES UP

Directed, written and produced by:

Suzhen Williams

Key cast: Shona Tan

State: Victoria

Country: Australia

Set in a prolonged COVID lockdown, this poetic film explores motherhood and isolation through the journey of Caitlin, a single mother who struggles to find hope amid the isolation.



WITH LOVE, NOURIA

Directed by: Mona Uehara

Produced by: Lucy Gallen

Key cast: Nouria Salehi

State: Victoria

Country: Australia

After four decades of food, culture and support, Dr Nouria Salehi reflects on the closing of the Afghan Gallery Restaurant and the community it will leave behind. This documentary reveals the legacy of Australia's first Afghan restaurant and the powerful significance it has had on the Afghan community in Australia.



20 YEARS LATER

Directed and written by:

Youbi Lee and Taka Takiguchi

Produced by: Youbi Lee, Taka Takiguchi, Ben Noonan, Richard Greenhalgh and Rena Singh

Key cast: Youbi Lee, Taka Takiguchi and Ben Noonan

State: Victoria

Country: Australia

An innovative short film that follows Matsu's journey from his anxious arrival at Melbourne's Spencer Street Station to the life he builds in Australia 20 years later. The film reflects on the rite of passage within a multicultural society through episodic memories and puppetry, exploring the intersections of time, memory, place and language.

PRIZES

Prizes of \$2,500 AUD have been generously donated by each of the following organisations to the winning filmmakers:

Swinburne University of Technology

The Bruce Wong Foundation

SBS

Victorian Multicultural Commission

Segmento

All award-winning films will receive an online professional development session with SBS industry representatives.

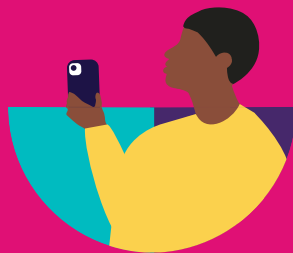
Victorian award-winning films in the fiction and non-fiction categories will receive an Independent Film Financing package from Cinespace mentors and producers, including several consultation sessions and auspice service support.

All Victorian award-winning films will be provided with several Melbourne International Film Festival annual memberships.



MULTICULTURAL FILM FESTIVAL 2026

ON TOUR



The Victorian Multicultural Commission is excited to announce the Multicultural Film Festival will go on tour throughout Victoria! View the screening dates and times at various locations below and help spread the word for more audiences to enjoy the program across the state.

Halls Gap Hub Centenary Hall
Northern Grampians Shire Council

Sunday 5 July
4:00pm – 6:00pm

St Arnaud Community Cinema
Northern Grampians Shire Council

Friday 18 September
4:30pm – 6:30pm

Peninsula Cinemas, Rosebud
Mornington Peninsula Shire

Saturday 17 October
4:00pm – 6:00pm

Bunjil Place
Narre Warren

Saturday 31 October
6:00pm – 9:00pm

SBS on Demand
Wednesday 9 November
online for 12 months

Federation Square outdoor screen

Wednesday 18 November
6:00pm and 8:00pm



For more information, scan the QR code
or visit [multiculturalcommission.vic.gov.au/
multicultural-film-festival](https://multiculturalcommission.vic.gov.au/multicultural-film-festival)

THANK YOU



The Victorian Multicultural Commission would like to acknowledge and thank the following partners for their support in delivering the Multicultural Film Festival 2026.

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Victorian Multicultural Awards For Excellence 2026

**Nominations now open
Until 13 July 2026**

The prestigious Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence recognise individuals and organisations making a difference by fostering cross-cultural understanding and supporting people from migrant, refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds across Victoria.

Help us shine a light on the inspiring contributions that make Victoria a rich, vibrant and more connected place for all.



For more information, scan the QR code
or visit [multiculturalcommission.vic.gov.au/
victorian-multicultural-awards-for-excellence](https://multiculturalcommission.vic.gov.au/victorian-multicultural-awards-for-excellence)

ABOUT THE VICTORIAN MULTICULTURAL COMMISSION

The Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) plays a critical role in strengthening cultural diversity in Victoria through consultation, advocacy, celebration and promotion.

Established in 1983 and constituted under the Multicultural Victoria Act 2011, the VMC, under the stewardship of Commissioners, is a statutory authority that acts as a vital conduit between the state's culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse communities and the Victorian Government.

The VMC connects multicultural and multifaith communities' communities with the government (and government with community) by engaging directly with people to understand issues. Together, they identify and recommend potential solutions to make public services more inclusive and accessible for culturally diverse Victorians.

The VMC is a trusted voice: connecting, empowering, influencing and providing platforms for social cohesion and advocacy. The VMC is dedicated to fostering unity, nurturing intercultural and interfaith dialogue and showcasing the many cultures that shape our Victorian identity.

The VMC is committed to positive and mutually beneficial partnerships. We welcome the opportunity to discuss sponsorship opportunities by contacting communications@vmc.vic.gov.au.

The 2026 Multicultural Film Festival has been delivered by the Victorian Multicultural Commission:

Vivienne Nguyen AM
Kashif Bouns
Paul Bateman
Jessie Robson
Nardia Brancatisano
Yusuf Liban
Husna Siddiqi

Sophia Sourris
Vyshnavee Wijekumar
Nazer Nazir
Katherine Murtagh
Robert Gruhn
Parsu Sharma Luitai
Masoud Navvabi

Thank you to our RMIT University interns for assisting on this project:

Diep Vi Ngoc
Que Tram Cao
Jerusha Fernando
Shoshanah Bishop



Victorian Multicultural Festival 2026



Premier's Multicultural Gala Dinner 2025



Cultural Diversity Week Media Launch 2026



Dumplings Against Depression 2025



Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence 2025



Multicultural Film Festival 2025

VOTE FOR YOUR FAVOURITE SHORT FILM



At the premiere screening, the People's Choice Award for Best Short Film sponsored by Segmento will be awarded to the film that receives the highest number of votes. Scan the QR code to choose your favourite film from MFF 2026.

Victorian Multicultural Commission

multiculturalcommission.vic.gov.au

contact@vmc.vic.gov.au

Follow us on socials

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