

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

3 - 14 JUNE 2026

- Press Pack [HERE](#)
- Interviews available

MEDIA RELEASE: Monday, 16 March 2026
Sydney, Australia

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES NEW BOARD MEMBERS



Sydney Film Festival has today announced the appointment of three new members to its Board, welcoming respected leaders from across Australia's creative industries, screen sector and business community.

Business leader and founder of the Calaur Advisory Deb Eckersley, joins the board as Treasurer, while Madman Entertainment co-founder and CEO Paul Wiegard and award-winning actor and writer Thomas Weatherall both join as directors. Thomas' contribution joins a wider arts initiative spearheaded by the NSW government to include young arts leaders on boards of preeminent cultural institutions.

The appointments bring together expertise spanning film distribution, performance and writing, corporate governance, finance and strategy. Together they strengthen the Festival's capacity to support Australian and international filmmakers, while guiding one of the country's most significant cultural institutions.

Together they join Sydney Film Festival Chair **Darren Dale**, alongside fellow directors **Debbie Lee**, **Amanda Maple-Brown** and **Penny Smallacombe** in leading the strategic direction of the Festival.



Preparations for the 73rd Sydney Film Festival are currently underway, with the 2026 edition set to take place from 3–14 June in cinemas across Sydney.

Minister for the Arts John Graham welcomed the appointments. *“I’m very pleased to see the Sydney Film Festival backing the call to support young arts and culture leaders by appointing Thomas Weatherall. Thomas will bring such a unique and youthful perspective to the stewardship of this treasured cultural event. I’m also excited to see Debra Eckersley and Paul Wiegard bring their extensive experience to the board.”*

Sydney Film Festival Chair Darren Dale said the new appointments reflect the Festival’s ongoing commitment to strong leadership across the arts and screen sectors. *“I’m delighted to welcome Deb Eckersley, Thomas Weatherall and Paul Wiegard to the Sydney Film Festival Board. Each brings a distinct perspective and a breadth of experience across the creative industries, the screen sector and the broader commercial landscape. As custodians of a Festival now in its 73rd edition, we share a responsibility to honour its legacy while continuing to champion bold filmmaking and strengthen its unique place in Sydney’s cultural life.”*

ABOUT DEB ECKERSLEY

Deb Eckersley joins the Sydney Film Festival Board as Treasurer, bringing more than 30 years’ experience across professional and financial services. A Chartered Accountant by training, she is the founder of Calaur Advisory and previously served as Group Executive, People and Culture at Bank of Queensland and Managing Partner, Human Capital at PwC Australia, advising major Australian companies on strategy, workforce transformation and organisational change. Eckersley currently sits on the boards of Technology One Limited and Chief Executive Women. She is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand.

ABOUT PAUL WIEGARD

Paul Wiegard joins the Board with extensive experience across film distribution and production. He is Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Madman Entertainment, one of Australasia’s leading independent film distributors, which has released more than 35 Oscar-nominated films including *Parasite*, *Anatomy of a Fall* and *Searching for Sugar Man*. Wiegard has executive produced more than 50 feature films and documentaries including *Nitram*, *The Australian Dream*, *The Giants* and *Girls Can’t Surf*. He also founded the documentary streaming platform DocPlay in 2016 and currently serves on the boards of Australian Centre for the Moving Image and Screenrights.

ABOUT THOMAS WEATHERALL

Thomas Weatherall joins the Board after serving as a jury member at the 2025 Festival, as an award-winning actor and writer working across screen and stage. He is widely known for his role as Malakai Mitchell in the Netflix series *Heartbreak High* and as Frank Gardner in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* directed by Justin Kurzel. His performance in *Heartbreak High* earned him an AACTA Awards honour for Best Supporting Actor and a Logie Awards award for Most Outstanding Supporting Actor. Weatherall is also an acclaimed playwright. His debut work *Blue*, developed through the Balnaves Fellowship, premiered at Belvoir St Theatre in 2023 to strong critical acclaim and later toured nationally and internationally. The play was nominated for the Nick Enright Prize for Playwriting at the NSW Premier's Literary Awards in 2024.

The appointments come as the Festival continues its work supporting filmmakers, audiences and the wider screen industry through year-round initiatives and its annual June event.



MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Connor Parissis, Senior Media and Public Relations Advisor:

E: connor@originalspin.com.au | M: 0424 739 471

Amber Forrest-Bisley, Company Director

E: amber@originalspin.com.au | M: 0405 363 817

ORIGINAL SPIN

EDITOR'S NOTES

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

The Sydney Film Festival is one of the world's longest-running and most prestigious film festivals. The 73rd edition, taking place from 3 to 14 June 2026, will showcase the very best in contemporary cinema and offer audiences the chance to experience premieres, red carpet events, and exciting special programs across Sydney.

The Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Screen NSW and Destination NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia, and the City of Sydney.

For more information, visit sff.org.au.

