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COURTNEY GIBSON TO LEAVE SAFC

Courtney Gibson has resigned from her role as CEO of the South Australian Film Corporation (SAFC); she will leave Adelaide to return to Sydney having delivered record investment and jobs into SA and ushered in a period of unprecedented growth and production activity in the state.

Gibson said: "I'm proud of everything the SAFC team and the SA screen sector has achieved during my time here, and I thank them along with all our agency and industry partners, for all our collaborations. South Australia has been established as a major national and international production destination and, with the local industry steered into primetime TV drama alongside film and other screen entertainment, the state's never been busier."

Gibson added "Now, with a 2019-22 Strategic Plan, a new Business Plan and Budget for the 19-20 year, revised Guidelines and Terms of Trade set to launch, with an ambitious and innovative Industry Development agenda and unprecedented screen spend now coming into the state, the way is paved for a new CEO to pick up the reins of the agency and lead the brilliant SAFC and Adelaide Studios teams, who've worked so hard and so well to achieve such great outcomes over the past 15 months."

During Gibson's time as CEO, New Line/Warner's blockbuster Hollywood feature *Mortal Kombat* has established South Australia as a major international production destination, with Matchbox /Dirty Films prime time ABC TV drama series *Stateless* bringing Cate Blanchett, Dominic West, Jai Courtney and Yvonne Strahovski to Adelaide and regional SA.

International feature film *Escape from Pretoria* brought Daniel Radcliffe to Adelaide, with Mark Lamprell's *Never Too Late* bringing Jack Thompson and Jacki Weaver, while another upcoming feature *Run Rabbit Run* sees director Daina Reid coming off the set of *The Handmaid's Tale* to helm a film based on best-selling Adelaide-based author Hannah Kent's first original screenplay.

The Hunting by Closer Productions and starring Richard Roxburgh and Asher Keddie is the first locally-originated, locally-developed and locally-produced primetime drama series ever in SA, *Upright* starring Tim Minchin is a major new drama series by Lingo Productions shot in the SA desert, *The Letdown Series 2* brought its production to Adelaide, while Julie Kalceff and Kirsty Stark's *First Day* is the first ever children's drama series starring a transgender teen, with Evie McDonald playing a transgender student navigating her first year in high school.

On Gibson's first day as CEO she introduced an open-ended policy commitment to Delivering Diversity and announced the removal of screen credits as a condition of development and production finance to enable direct access to funds by emerging practitioners. She launched Full Tilt, an industry development and content strand for practitioners with disability, coming soon to SBS, and Deadly Family Portraits, a strand by emerging indigenous practitioners for the ABC, along with a range of responses to the Raising Films survey about the challenges of being a carer in the sector, including the Doing it Differently initiative and the Return to Work Rider.

Also launched was the Lottie Lyell Award won by Shalom Almond, and the Adelaide Studios Artist Residency, the 2019 resident artist being Amos Gebhardt, with the second annual residency now open for applications. And this year the SAFC launched the Bird in Hand Nest, a workspace for South Australians doing business in LA, at Charlie's, the Australians in Film HQ in Hollywood.

Gibson said “I’ve so relished the work at the SAFC and Adelaide Studios, but co-parenting by remote is extremely challenging and the time is right for me to return to my family in Sydney.”

Minister for Innovation and Skills David Pisoni said: “On behalf of the Marshall Liberal Government, I sincerely thank Courtney for guiding the SA Film Corporation at a stellar time for the local industry. Securing the state’s largest ever production, in Mortal Kombat, during her tenure has resulted in a quantum shift for how South Australia is viewed in the world of film.”

SAFC Chair Peter Hanlon said: “In Courtney’s 15 months at the helm of the Agency, there has been an exponential uplift in vision and strategy, as well as screen industry activity, with the state and the Studios now major go-to destinations for local, national and international production. We are very disappointed she is leaving but fully understand her need to return to Sydney.”

Gibson paid tribute to the SA government: “In Minister David Pisoni and Premier Steven Marshall, the SA screen sector has the most enthusiastic and visionary government support. I thank them both, along with SAFC Chair Peter Hanlon, for their thoroughly committed backing of the agency and the state’s screen industry.”

Gibson will leave the agency following the Screen Makers Conference at the end of July.

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