



**MEDIA RELEASE – Friday 9 September, 2022**

## **Travis Akbar awarded prestigious Centralised First Nations Documentary Australia Fellowship**

South Australian First Nations filmmaker **Travis Akbar** has been awarded the prestigious Centralised First Nations Documentary Australia Fellowship to develop *Kuta New Wiltja (Toward New Camp)*.

Now in its third year, the Fellowship is an unparalleled career-boosting opportunity for First Nations documentary filmmakers in the Northern Territory and South Australia presented by **Documentary Australia (DA)**, **Screen Territory**, the **South Australian Film Corporation**, **National Indigenous Television (NITV)** and the **Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS Indigenous)**.

As the third Fellow awarded under the initiative, Travis will write, direct and co-produce his documentary with a grant of up to \$30,000 for professional development and mentoring, as well as up to \$10,000 of in-kind support to attend training opportunities at AFTRS.

Travis is a Waljen man from the Wongutha First Nation from the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia, and was raised on Wirangu country near Ceduna, South Australia. His documentary *Kuta New Wiltja (Toward New Camp)* will retrace the journey of his great grandparents, Lali, a tribal Wongutha woman, and Afghan cameleer Jack Akbar, whose love was deemed illegal under the policies of the circa 1920s Western Australian Government’s “Chief Protector of Aborigines” A.O. Neville.

Aiming to learn more about their great grandparents, Travis and sibling Skye Akbar take to the highway to re-create the journey Jack and Lali took to escape the violent police who wanted to arrest them for being in love. Beginning in Kalgoorlie, Western Australia, Travis and Skye will visit their family and Elders to yarn about the story of their ancestors before hitting the highway to camp where Jack and Lali camped, visit the places they visited, and see what they saw. The film will also explore Jack’s time teaching R.M Williams how to weave, Jack’s work in Renmark and Jack and Lali’s move to Lyndhurst in remote South Australia.

**2022 Centralised Documentary Australia First Nations Fellow Travis Akbar** said: “Being selected as the Centralised First Nations Documentary Australia Fellow is an honour. *Kuta New Wiltja* is a personal project and to be awarded the opportunity to explore and develop it couldn’t have come at a better time. I have worked tirelessly for the last four years, with the support of my wife and children, to chase my dream, and the last few months have really shown me I am on the right track. But all of that, of course, has meant spending less time with my family, so to receive a fellowship for a project with the theme of family is not just a huge reward, but an incredible show of confidence in my ability. So thank you to Documentary Australia, the South Australian Film Corporation and all the program partners.”

**Kate Croser, CEO, South Australian Film Corporation** said “The SAFC congratulates Travis Akbar on being awarded this prestigious Fellowship. Travis is an extremely talented emerging screen creative and the SAFC is pleased to support his ongoing development, and to support this exciting Fellowship program as part of our commitment to grow, highlight and support South Australian First Nations voices and stories on screens locally and globally.”

**Dr Mitzi Goldman, CEO, Documentary Australia** said “It is deeply satisfying to be able to support the professional development of First Nations storytellers. Our country and culture as a whole will be enriched by the voices heard as a result of this initiative. I look forward to meeting Travis and discovering his story and am honoured that we can support him in this way.



**Marissa McDowell, Acting Head of Commissions at NITV**, said: “NITV is thrilled to be able to support Travis in his career development through this important initiative, and as he brings his beautiful project to life - a powerful story exploring history, culture, connection and Country. It’s great to be working with our partners to continue the success of Centralised, as part of our commitment at NITV to supporting the next generation of First Nations talent in the Australian screen sector.”

**Jennie Hughes, Director, Screen Territory** said, “Screen Territory is delighted to be collaborating with our Centralised partners on this important initiative. The Centralised DA Fellowship provides a unique opportunity for SA and NT First Nations filmmakers to further hone their craft and to develop their documentary project. We congratulate this year’s recipient Travis Akbar and look forward to seeing his compelling story realised on screen”.

**Dr Romaine Moreton, Director of First Nations and Outreach, AFTRS** said, ‘It is wonderful that AFTRS is able to continue to support Travis in his filmmaking and storytelling journey through the Centralised DA Fellowship. The ongoing need for support through multiple phases of skills development for filmmakers such as Travis is important to not only the individual First Nations practitioner, but to the lands, peoples, communities, and networks of which each is a vital member. We look forward to championing the ongoing emergence of Travis’ unique, creative voice.’

The Centralised First Nations Documentary Australia Fellowship is presented as part of the Centralised initiative, developed by the SAFC and Screen Territory together with collaborating partners Screen Australia’s First Nations Department, Documentary Australia (DA), AFTRS Indigenous (Australian Film, Television and Radio School), ABC Indigenous and NITV to deliver a range of opportunities for First Nations screen creatives in South Australia and Northern Territory, creating clear pathways for emerging talent including mentoring, workshops, attachments and internships through the centre of Australia. For more information go to [safilm.com.au/centralised](http://safilm.com.au/centralised)

#### **MEDIA CONTACT:**

SAFC Publicist Cathy Gallagher | 0416 227 282 | [cathy@abcfilm.com](mailto:cathy@abcfilm.com)

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