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MEDIA RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EXHIBITORS SEEKING CINEMA ACCESS EXEMPTION

Arts Access Victoria and The Other Film Festival are calling upon individuals and organisations to voice their concern regarding the recent application made by Village Roadshow, Greater Union, Hoyts and Reading Cinemas requesting exemption from the Disability Discrimination Act for a period of two and a half years.

This means that Australians who are Deaf, hard of hearing, legally blind and vision impaired, including older Australians, stand to lose their right to complain to the Human Rights Commission about the lack of provision of captioning and audio description services at ANY of the 125 cinemas (1182 screens) owned by these four exhibitors.

If the exemption is granted, cinemas will **only** provide captioning and audio description for a minimum of three (3) screenings in 35 cinemas around Australia.

Let's put that into perspective:

- Jointly, these companies have 1,182 screens across Australia.
- They show approximately 30 movies per screen every week.
- That's a total of 41,370 screenings per week (1182 screens x 5 sessions per day x 7 days)
- Of these, only 105 will be captioned and audio described. This is equal to 0.3% of all movies screened.
- At this pace, it will take 1000 years to achieve universal access, that is, access to all screenings in all cinemas.



Arts Access Victoria and The Other Film Festival ask - Is this fair?

A key element of the Rudd Government's National Arts and Disability Strategy is to:

9. Film, television and broadcast industry

Explore opportunities to enhance accessibility and inclusive practices in the film, television and broadcast industry. This may include programs in Auslan and efforts to increase captioning and audio-description services, particularly for government funded films, and promoting international best practice models which support casting artists with a disability

Priority projects, Focus area 4. Strategic development, NADS

(http://www.cmc.gov.au/publications/national_arts_and_disability_strategy)

Is the cinema exhibitors' proposed exemption in the spirit of the goals of our National Strategy? We don't think so.

We call upon you to voice your objection by sending an email or letter to disabdis@humanrights.gov.au by **Monday 7 December 2009**.

For further information, you can visit the Human Rights Commission website: http://humanrights.gov.au/disability_rights/exemptions/cinema/notice.htm

MEDIA ENQUIRIES & INTERVIEWS

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