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Indian Film Festival of MELBOURNE 2015

THE INDIAN FILM FESTIVAL OF MELBOURNE
'Equality' announced as the 2015 theme

Media Release: Friday 5 April 'Equality' is the theme of the **2015 Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM)**, the southern hemisphere's greatest annual celebration of Indian cinema, taking place this year from 14 – 27 August.

Announced today at a press conference attended by Indian superstar and Festival Ambassador **Vidya Balan,** Victoria's Minister for Creative Industries and Equality**, Martin Foley** and IFFM director **Mitu Bhowmick-Lange,** the equality theme will be explored through a special program of films, the Western Union Short Film Competition and a special panel event featuring Australian and Indian guests.

This year's Festival's opening weekend coincides with **Indian Independence Day** on August 15. All day celebrations of India's vibrant culture will culminate in the second **IFFM Awards** taking place at the **National Gallery of Victoria** with a host of Indian stars and industry leaders in attendance. The awards will feature a charity fashion show of Australian designs with all funds raised going towards The Royal Children's Hospital Foundation.

Vidya Balan: *It is wonderful to see the festival putting the focus on issues of equality. Film is a powerful tool for entertaining but also for building awareness and creating cultural and social change."*

Festival Director Mitu Bhowmick Lange: *" This year we are delighted to celebrate India's national day through ceremony, dance, fashion and the recognition of excellence in our film culture. In the Equality program we have Indian filmmakers – from independent short film makers to our most powerful directors turning their gaze to issues of freedom and diversity in the contemporary world and celebrating the diversity that defines us all."*

Highlights of the 2015 Indian Film Festival:

Following the extraordinary success of the inaugural IFFM Awards last year, the **2015 IFFM Awards** attended by many of India's finest stars and industry figures, will take place at the National Gallery of Victoria celebrating the country's multi layered, ever evolving and fiercely independent film culture.

The IFFM Awards will feature a fashion show of designs. Iconic Indian designer Anamika Khanna along with her Australian counterparts will showcase a unique collection modelled by Australian models, celebrities , Bollywood stars and people from various walks of life. The garments will be auctioned off during the evening with all proceeds going to The Royal Children's Hospital in an exciting new partnership.

Daytime Independence Day celebrations include the raising of the Indian Flag at Federation Square followed by the Telstra Bollywood Dance Competition judged by a panel of the Festival guests.

The theme of equality is explored in a number of critically lauded features and documentaries including *Umrika*, (2015, Prashant Nair) winner of the World Cinema Dramatic Audience Award at the Sundance Film Festival, a 'mythology of America and more generally, how cultures perceive each other; NAANU AVANALLA, AVALU (I AM NOT HE..SHE), a day in the life of a transgender; the documentary *Newborns* a film about memory and loss, and *PK* (2014, dir Rajkumar Hirani, starring Amir Khan) a film that has polarised audiences in India due to its courageous and bold discussions of religion and religiosity while breaking box office records world wide.

An Equality panel featuring high profile spokespersons from Australia and India will focus on inequality of gender, race, gender, disability and sexuality and how both Australia and India manage equality on our screens and in society in general.

The Western Union short film competition is open for entries from Indian and Australian filmmakers. To be eligible, entrants must submit a film of no more than ten minutes duration, which references the 2015 theme, 'Equality'. The winning films will be screened at IFFM. The winning Indian filmmaker will travel to Melbourne and the Australian winner will travel to Mumbai, the home of Bollywood.

The full program of the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne will be announced in June.

Festival Dates: August 14 – August 27.

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For more information regarding this media release please contact:
Miranda Brown Publicity 03 9419 0931 • miranda@mbpublicity.com.au