

For immediate release

NITV commissions first-ever scripted live-action children's series GRACE BESIDE ME.

A rich and humorous coming-of-age story.

NITV today announced its first ever commission of a scripted live-action series, *Grace Beside Me*. With major production investment from Screen Australia's Indigenous Department, Screen Queensland, the ABC and assistance from Screen NSW, *Grace Beside Me* is the story of an extraordinary girl trying to lead an ordinary life.

In an Australian first, the series consisting of 13 x 26 minute episodes will be screened on three subsequent networks. *Grace Beside Me* will premiere on NITV, followed by a secondary broadcast on the ABC, and a third release on subscription TV channel Disney Australia.

Adapted from the award winning novel by Sue McPherson, *Grace Beside Me* follows Fuzzy Mac, whose life is turned upside down when, at the age of 13, she discovers she can see ghosts and spirits. But all she wants is to fit in and have fun with her mates. It's hard enough navigating the highs and lows of becoming a teenager while living with your eccentric Nan and Pop, without also having to deal with needy ghosts, mischievous totems and cantankerous Ancestors.

Combining whimsy, adventure, comedy and drama, *Grace Beside Me* takes 8 – 12 year old audiences on a roller coaster adventure as Fuzzy reluctantly learns to accept her gift and understand its importance. With one foot in the Indigenous realm of culture, Country – and spirits – and the other firmly planted in the world of a 21st century teenager, Fuzzy Mac's journey is to realise she belongs to both in her own unique way. She must learn to be herself and to walk in two worlds.

Tanya Orman, Channel Manager, NITV said: "This is another hugely exciting step for NITV and testament to the beauty and depth of our story telling. Our goal is to create award-winning children's content that speaks to a new generation, and this is truly unique story telling from the world's oldest story tellers for Australian children. The story of Fuzzy Mac is told with warmth, humour and pathos by the best of our Indigenous screenwriters."

Penny Smallacombe, Head of Indigenous at Screen Australia said: "Reaching young audiences with Indigenous and culturally diverse content is an incredibly important focus for Screen Australia. We are proud to be supporting *Grace Beside Me* which is helmed by an all-female producing team, including Aboriginal producer Dena Curtis, and are confident that with three Australian broadcasts this unique story will resonate with audiences around the country."

"We are so proud to support *Grace Beside Me* and have Queensland play a key role," said Screen Queensland CEO, Tracey Vieira. "Queensland is home to some of Australia's most talented creatives in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander screen community including Queensland-based writer Sue McPherson and producer/director Dena Curtis. Our support of *Grace Beside Me* follows on from the recent launch of our SQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy 2016-19 that outlines our commitment to local Indigenous practitioners and ensuring they are an important focus in SQ's funding decisions. *Grace Beside Me* presents opportunities to our local practitioners that allows us to grow a stronger and richer industry base with long-lasting economic and cultural significance for all Australians."



Michael Carrington, ABC's Head of Children's and Education said, "I'm thrilled that we are building strong ties with NITV talent and offering a much-deserved additional platform for Indigenous talent both on and off screen. Children's audiences across Australia are bound to enjoy *Grace Beside Me*, a smart funny drama series made specifically for them".

Grace Beside Me is produced by Lois Randall (*The Gods of Wheat Street, Nan and a Whole Lot of Trouble*) and Dena Curtis (*8 MMM Aboriginal Radio, Nan and a Whole Lot of Trouble*) with direction by Beck Cole (*Black Comedy, Redfern Now, The Warriors*) and Adrian Russell Wills (*Wentworth, Redfern Now, The Warriors*). Writers include Danielle MacLean (*Little J and Big Cuz, Double Trouble, Blown Away*), Jon Bell (*The Gods of Wheat Street, Cleverman*), Sue McPherson (*Grace Beside Me, Nan and a Whole Lot of Trouble*), Briar Grace-Smith (*Being Eve, Kaitangata Twitch*), Adrian Russell Wills (*Redfern Now, Ready for This*), Tristan Savage (*Gubbament Man, Un-Australian*) and Erica Glynn (*Little J and Big Cuz*).

Grace Beside Me is a Magpie Pictures production, developed with the assistance of NITV, the Australian Children's Television Foundation, Screen Australia's Indigenous Department, Screen QLD, the ABC and Screen NSW. The series is currently in pre-production and will commence filming in early 2017.