

MEDIA RELEASE

Quintet of films named ‘Films of the Year’ by the Catholic Film Office

*Rabbit Proof Fence, Tracker, Beneath Clouds, Black and White,
Australian Rules*
take the Church’s top honours

For the first time in the award's history the Australian Catholic Film Office has given its Film of the Year to four films which focus on Indigenous Australians. Director of the Office and Jury Chair, Jesuit Priest, Fr Richard Leonard said, “By custom we have always decided on just one film each year, but with such strong work in the cinema this year on a critical national issue, we wanted to honour this bloc of work.”

While all five films are of varying cinematic quality, they follow up on the widespread movement for aboriginal reconciliation that has been on the national agenda for some years. “Given what the Pope and the Australian Bishops have said about these issues, we wanted to reward each filmmaker for raising different, but complementary insights into the complex history, the sometimes fraught present and, hopefully, the just and reconciled future in which back and white Australians can share,” Fr Leonard said.

Rabbit Proof Fence is an extraordinary tale of the survival of three children who were forcibly removed from their families so they can be assimilated into white society. *Tracker* is a stylised, slow and deliberate study of the human condition where an Aboriginal man shows a young white man that he need not be a prisoner of the past. *Black and White* is the story of the wrongful conviction and near-execution of Max Stuart for rape and murder in the 1950’s. *Australian Rules* is a contemporary racial drama about the price some people pay, both, from their freedom from fear and their imprisonment in it. *Beneath Clouds* is a road film about how young Australians on the fringe of society form bonds that help them survive their past and prepare for a new future.

“In each case these films hold up a mirror to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians and asks us to think about where we have been with each other, and more importantly where we want to go,” Fr Leonard said.

**Fr Richard Leonard SJ, the Director of the Australian Catholic
Film Office is available for interviews or comment on 03
93491272 or 0407 500 396**