

# SHORT AND SWEET AWARD WINNERS

A truly accessible film festival that is open to all

BY RYAN GOODWIN\*

ANYONE can enter. Anyone can vote. Anyone can attend the awards night. The Focus On Ability (FOA) film competition is the world's most accessible short film festival. It's also the most lucrative.

More than \$150,000 in cash and prizes, including \$10,000 from ClubsNSW, was awarded to filmmakers at the ninth annual FOA Film Awards held at The Concourse, Chatswood, in September. The Epping Club and Chatswood RSL also contributed \$5000 and \$2500, respectively, towards the red-carpet event.

ClubsNSW has been a supporter of NOVA Employment since 2013, and has been a major sponsor of the competition for three consecutive years.

This year a record 210 entries from 19 countries meant the event grew to about 600 guests, all enjoying the gala night that lived up to the theme: Focus on the ability of people with disability.

**Go on, wet your appetite for FOA18, the 10th year of competition is going to be big!**

Aside from the many thoughtful, evocative and beautiful films, there were song and dance, drink and food aplenty, and the speeches were short!

Those short speeches were also sincere. Minister for Ageing and Disability, Ray William MP said: "It's an understatement that I'm proud to be here tonight. I've been involved with NOVA for the past decade through my local office at Rouse Hill. On being offered the portfolio of disability, I was asked if I knew anything about it, to which I replied, 'I know you have to focus on ability!' Such is the wisdom that NOVA CEO Martin Wren has instilled in me over the years."

Winning films varied in style from a

documentary called Tilly's Symphony to a formal speech given by 18-year-old Blaise Borrer (who won a Kia for his succinct three-minute film!)

Short films included international winner John Lawson's Whitney's Wedding, of which more than 90 per cent of the cast has a disability, contrasting greatly with the lack of diversity on our everyday screens. Mr Lawson travelled from his home in the US to attend the event, and other winners were flown in from Kenya and Sri Lanka.

To feast on these films, go to [focusonability.com.au](http://focusonability.com.au). You can also catch highlights on SBS at 4.30pm, Saturday, November 18 or Foxtel-Aurora Channel 163 at 7.30pm, Sundays. A new series starts on December 3. ■

**\*Ryan Goodwin is the media & advertising manager nova employment and creative director of the Focus On Ability film festival.**

