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LEAH POTGIETER, MP

DA SPOKESPERSON ON SPORT ARTS AND CULTURE

25 October 2025

RE: Urgent Engagement on NFVF Submission for South Africa's Official Oscar Campaign

Dear Minister McKenzie,

I write to you again regarding the urgent support required for South Africa's official Oscar entry, *The Heart is a Muscle*, as the international awards campaign reaches a critical phase. The National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) has, since its initial rejection, committed R400 000 toward the campaign and submitted a formal request to the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC) for an additional R600 000.

While I have received confirmation that my previous correspondence to your office has been forwarded, no substantive engagement or guidance has yet been provided. I am therefore requesting your urgent intervention to ensure this submission is actively addressed, recognising that your leadership and DSAC's influence extend far beyond funding alone.

Since my initial correspondence of 7 October 2025, the campaign has gained significant traction. MultiChoice, AFDA, the City of Cape Town and the NFVF have all stepped forward to support this national effort. DSAC's strategic engagement at this stage, through coordination, advocacy and leveraging networks across government and private sectors, as well as possible financial support, could be decisive in positioning South Africa for a successful campaign on the global stage.

The Heart is a Muscle has already demonstrated exceptional artistic merit and international resonance, having premiered at the 75th Berlin International Film Festival, where it was awarded the Ecumenical Jury Prize, and screened at the Sydney Film Festival, with the Cairo International Film Festival next. Domestically, it was named Best Feature Film at the Silwerskermfees, reflecting both its cultural relevance and public impact.

This campaign represents more than a single film. It is an opportunity to showcase South African storytelling at the highest level, strengthen our global cultural footprint and highlight creative potential emerging from communities often overlooked in national narratives. DSAC's leadership, through advocacy, diplomatic engagement and partnerships with private sector stakeholders, can amplify this impact far beyond what financial contributions alone achieve.

With only weeks remaining before final Oscar ballots are cast, time is of the essence. I therefore request that the Minister and relevant DSAC officials proactively engage the producers and campaign coordinators, to finalise the department's role in supporting South Africa's official entry.

South Africa's creative sector continues to achieve global recognition despite significant obstacles. At this moment, decisive ministerial leadership can ensure that our filmmakers are not forced to compete with less support than their global peers and that the country's artistic talent is given the platform it deserves.

I trust that you will treat this matter with the urgency it warrants and look forward to your earliest response.



Leah Potgieter MP