

Media Release:

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Australian Feature Film has Darwin in its Sights

The Northern Territory Film Office (NTFO) has just announced Sydney production company Arenafilm has Darwin in its sights as a major location for its political thriller, *Balibo*, a feature film starring Anthony LaPaglia who will play the lead role of Roger East.

NTFO Director Penelope McDonald said *Balibo* is based on the deaths of five Australian based journalists in Timor-Leste in 1975, and the subsequent investigation by Australian journalist Roger East, who is enticed to Timor-Leste by the young José Ramos-Horta.

"We've been assisting the production with logistics advice and finding potential crew on the ground in Darwin, as well as assisting in trying to secure accommodation for cast and crew which has proved increasingly difficult due to peak tourist season," Ms McDonald said.

"Robert Connolly the writer/director will be in Darwin this weekend for a second casting call with potential Timorese actors, and will be accompanied by the production designer and line producer who will be scouting for potential locations in and around Darwin."

Balibo will be directed by Robert Connolly and produced by John Maynard, the creative team who have established reputations as progressive filmmakers with previous films including *The Boys*, *The Bank*, *Three Dollars* and most recently *Romulus, My Father*, starring Eric Bana, which was among the highest grossing Australian films at the Australian Box Office for 2007.

"Darwin is our first choice as an integral part of the story is set here shortly after Cyclone Tracey and we would love to work with the local community who have always been great supporters of Australian film," Mr Maynard said.

Ms McDonald said it would be terrific for Darwin if *Balibo* proceeds with plans to film here, and suggested that there will also be potential for extras to be cast later in the year.

"This film could be the second major film to feature Darwin as a filming location, following closely on the heels of *Australia*, the Baz Luhrmann epic which filmed in Darwin in 2007."

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Media Note – for more information contact Penelope McDonald on 0410 695 272.

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