

The Australian

Sydney to hold AFI awards at Opera House from 2011, NSW Premier says

- Michael Bodey
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Bragging rights: NSW Premier Kristina Keneally, left, after announcing that Sydney will host the AFI Awards from 2011, and actress Cate Blanchett at the Opera House today. Picture by James Elsby

Source: The Australian

SYDNEY has secured the film awards ceremony that Melbourne didn't want by paying the bill for the Australian Film Institute Awards from 2011.

NSW Premier Kristina Keneally announced that the NSW capital city would host the awards for at least three years, beginning in 2011, at the Sydney Opera House.

“It further reinforces NSW's position as the creative capital,” Ms Keneally said.

“Sixty-three per cent of content - film and television content - in Australia is produced here in NSW,” she said.

Ms Keneally said the NSW government was “spending \$1.7 million per year” on the AFIs.

The Australian understands that the AFI had asked the Victorian Major Events Co for \$2 million a year in order to guarantee the free-to-air TV broadcast of the awards.

“We think this is a good investment in a film and television industry that returns over \$400 million to the economy,” the NSW Premier said.

The Victorian government, through the VMEC, previously declined the offer to extend its run of nine years hosting the AFI Awards.

In December, VMEC chief executive Brendan McClements said the AFI's proposal "was not cost-effective" and did not offer value for money.

In a complex arrangement, the awards ceremony and its sponsor are packaged together and the AFI pays for its broadcast.

Consequently, the most recent AFI Awards broadcasts have included clumsy advertorial content from sponsors including Victoria, Blockbuster, L'Oreal Paris and current naming rights sponsor, Samsung Digital.

The 2009 AFI Awards, which were dominated by *Samson and Delilah*, were shown on the Nine Network at 9.30pm on a Saturday night during the non-ratings period - it attracted an audience of 343,000 viewers.

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