**Angus McDonald’s documentary highlights the plight of refugees imprisoned on Australia’s Manus Island**

￼Refugees and asylum seekers were held captive by the Australian Federal government under inhumane conditions on Manus Island in PNG for over 6 years. The policy is designed to be so brutal that asylum seekers are forced into despair and agree to go back home to whatever they have fled. Through his documentary MANUS, Angus McDonald uses the first hand testimonials of many of the island's refugee residents, who share their harrowing stories. Manus won the Best Documentary Award at the Oscar qualifying 2019 St Kilda Film Festival and Best Byron Film at the 2019 Byron International Film Festival. MANUS is and Official Selection for the BAFTA qualifying 2019 Aesthetica Short Film Festival in the UK in November.

*Isolated and separated from their families, hear stories from the men on Manus in their own words*

By law, Australia do not resettle any migrants who approach the country by boat, a policy intended to discourage dangerous ocean crossings and human smuggling. However NGO’s including MSF, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and human rights lawyers plus the United Nations have continually criticized the policy for the inherent cruelty and human rights violations perpetuated against those who have been transferred offshore.

Since July 2013, Australia has paid Papua New Guinea, its closest neighbour, to agree to permit the housing of hundreds of migrants caught at sea while trying to reach the continent. At present, hundreds of migrants, all men, and mostly from the Middle East, Africa and Asia, still remain held in Papua New Guinea. The vast majority, more than 80% have official refugee status.

One of the refugees held on Manus since 2013, a Kurdish journalist from Iran named Behrouz Boochani, won Australia’s richest literary prize in 2019 for his book about Manus Island titled “No Friend But The Mountains”, which was tapped out over a long period in a series of messages via Whatsapp to a translator in Melbourne. The book described his journey to Australia by boat and subsequent detention. During over six years of captivity on the PNG island, Boochani was an outspoken critic of the regime that imprisoned him and left hundreds of other refugees indefinitely detained. A poem by Boochani about Manus Island was voiced by him in Farsi specifically for the film and appears in the final sequence.

Director Angus McDonald, an established Australian artist, began filmmaking in 2017 believing that film was the best medium in which to reach the public to advocate for more humanitarian approaches to managing the welfare of forcibly displaced people seeking asylum, particularly in Australia. His content is created under the name Howling Eagle and his YouTube series titled "Philoxenia" (a Greek word meaning 'extending hospitality and friendship to the stranger') are a selection of short films and interviews about refugee protection across the globe and current refugee policies in Australia. Howling Eagle has also engaged in a social impact campaign, advocating, fundraising and assisting other refugee support organizations. MANUS is McDonald’s first standalone film.