



Scriptwriter Justin Olstein is making a short film with a Holocaust theme.

Photo: Peter Haskin

## FILM

# Script scores \$10,000 grant

A short film by writer-director Justin Olstein is coming to fruition, thanks to a timely grant from a local council. **Danny Gocs** reports.

WRITER and film director Justin Olstein has received a \$10,000 grant from the City of Port Phillip to make a short film with Holocaust themes.

Olstein, a former Bialik College student who graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts' School of Film and Television in 2011, received the grant for his script for *The Visitor*.

"The script has gone through a couple of drafts and is ready to shoot," Olstein told *The AJN*.

Planning is well under way with Melbourne-based producer Clea Frost on board for the film shoot in mid-September. When completed, the film will run for 8-10 minutes.

"One of the conditions of the grant is to have a public screening in the City of Port Phillip, so we are planning a screening and panel discussion at the Jewish Museum of Australia next year," said Olstein.

He has already had success with a 2011 short film, *Adam's Tallis*, and with *Curtain Call*, which screened at the Melbourne International Film Festival in 2014 and was also broadcast on SBS.

"It is a tough business as you work on projects and develop them and try to get finance, and this all takes time as you navigate through the process, but I'm pleased that

some of my projects have done well."

Olstein said he wrote the script last year – it has already won the best short film screenplay at the New York Screenplay Contest late last year – and decided to apply for a grant from the City of Port Phillip, which has just announced grants totalling \$136,000 to assist 16 local artists and organisations with creative projects for the community.

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**Justin Olstein**  
Scriptwriter

*The Visitor* is set in the present day and revolves around a middle-aged woman who wakes up in the middle of the night to find a woman on her doorstep who turns out to be an escapee from Auschwitz during World War II.

"*The Visitor* is a hybrid piece, a psychological thriller with fantastical elements, but at its core it is very

much concerned with the way in which a past trauma can take hold of the present and cling to it desperately," he said.

"The film looks at how psychological traumas are passed on from one generation to another, and in this case it references the Holocaust."

Olstein said the film script was inspired by his Jewish upbringing and a recent trip to Eastern Europe with his partner to investigate his family's ancestral roots.

"We went to Europe to research our roots – my mum's family came from Hungary and my dad's family was from Poland.

"So many of the towns do not have a Jewish population any more," he said.

"We also visited Auschwitz – I tried to imagine how it would have been during the war."

Olstein divides his time as a director and writer with working as a video editor.

"I'm fortunate that I'm working in the film industry and thrilled to bring this story to life," he said.

"Short films are usually made by filmmakers to test the waters before going onto feature films and longer-form projects," he said, adding that many short films are screened at film festivals around the world.