

# **Casting Guidelines NZ**

## **These Guidelines have been prepared by the following Casting Directors :**

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## **In consultation with and endorsed by the following Actors Agents :**

EMS Actors, Gail Cowan Management, Johnson Laird Management, Karen Kay Management, Kathryn Rawlings & Associates, NZ Talent, Odd Management, Pro Actors, Robert Bruce Agency, Springsouth Actors, and Talent Banque

## **In consultation with and input by the following Actors Agents :**

Auckland Actors

## **and with feedback sought from (and any comments taken on board) from the following Talent and Model Agents:**

62 Models, Ali McD, August Models, Background Talent, Bubblegum Kidz, Clyne Management, Dreamcast, Folio, Fresh Talent, Human Garden Agency, Kam Talent, LMC Models, Morris Talent, Nova Models, Possum Productions, Real People, Red Eleven, Red Rocket, Renaissance, Sista Talent, Stellar Management, SVM Actors, Tag Creatives, Talento The Agencie, TWA, Vanity Walk, Visage

## **Statement of Intent**

New Zealand Casting Directors believe both as a group and individually that all casting practices should be performed/undertaken with the intention of attaining the best possible result from every person who auditions.

We aim to work in the best interest of all parties involved in the casting process and it is with this intention that we submit these Casting guidelines.

## **Guidelines**

For the purposes of achieving the best possible result as per our Statement of Intent we have put together some guidelines which either explain the process of casting, and/or give a reference to what Casting Directors and Actors can expect from each other within the process of casting.

Below is firstly an outline of the process which is necessary for an understanding of the guidelines as it gives both definitions used within the guidelines, and also explains the differences between the casting of television commercials (hereafter referred to as TVCs) and casting of Drama, Comedy or various genres for TV or Film. The casting of Theatre is not covered within these guidelines as it is rare for a Casting Director to be involved in theatre casting in NZ.

## **Layman's Terms**

As the purpose of this document is to serve as an expression of intent for the benefit of actors and casting directors we have used plain English rather than legalese. In other words we would like the process of reading this document to be as friendly for all concerned, as we would like the casting process to be.

## **A Broad Outline of the Process & any Relevant Definitions**

A Producer and/or Director of a TVC or drama engages a Casting Director to find performers to fill the roles for their tv/drama/film. The producer and/or director will specify the number of roles, the type of person they would like, and for tvcs - the fee for the role and the conditions of the contract. Some of these conditions may be defined in consultation with the Casting Director, who may also consult with actor's agents.

In the case of TVCs the producer of the film company also has to have the agreement from the advertising agency producer, who in turn has to have sign off from their client. Drama and Film also needs sign off from a number of people additional to the producer and director.

Once all necessary agreements have been reached a brief is sent to Actors Agents who then submit actors they feel are appropriate for the role. We will refer to this from now on as being the Casting Brief. In the case of TVCs, scripts are generally available at the same time as the Casting Brief. In the case of drama, scripts are frequently not finalised at the time of casting. There may be audition pieces and a synopsis in lieu of a complete script. It is a basic understanding that the more information that an actor has about the role they play, and the context of that role in

the entire script, the better the audition they can provide, therefore Casting Directors will use their best endeavours to gain as much information as possible from the director and or producer to provide to the Actor's Agent for their performer.

A condition of submitting actors for a role is that the conditions outlined in the Casting Brief are agreed to by the Actors Agent for those actors. It is the duty of the Actor's Agent to ensure that any relevant conditions or restrictions for any submitted, or requested, actors are communicated to the Casting Director before an audition is confirmed.

The Casting Director selects the actors they feel are best suited to the role and arranges via the Actors Agent to audition those actors. All relevant information including scripts, character outlines, synopses are given to the actor via their agent. The results of an audition are looked at by a number of people who may include the Director, the Film Company Producer, the Advertising Agency Producer, the Advertising Agency Creatives, and the Client (for TVCs) with additional people for Film/Drama including people who have invested in the project.

When confirmed the actor is then offered the role via their Agent who then enters into contract negotiations with the Producer/Producers. On occasion the Producer(s) may be represented by the Casting Director in the negotiation and contracting process.

NB: Actor's Agent: Our guidelines refer to Actors Agents meaning they represent an Actor. Where a performer is not represented by an Agent it can be read that they represent themselves and can take the role of the Agent specified in any given clause.

## **GUIDELINES PART A – PREPARATION FOR AUDITIONS**

### Advance Notice of Audition

1. (i) The parties acknowledge that adequate preparation time is essential to allow performers to prepare for an audition.

Where the performer is required to prepare a dialogue piece for a TV drama or Film audition the Casting Director will use their best endeavours to provide a minimum of 48 hours notice. When the role is a principal role for a film or drama Casting Directors will use their best endeavours to provide a minimum of 72 hours notice.

(ii) Given that TVCs vary widely in the amount of preparation time required it is not viable to specify a minimum preparation time. The Casting Director will endeavour to provide what they believe to be adequate preparation time. It is recognised that at times, this may be unachievable due to budget and timeline constraints.

(iii) It is the actor's responsibility to be easily contactable by their agent so that they can put to full use such notice to prepare for their audition.

### Scripts & Other Relevant Character/Role Information

2. (i) In the case of TVCs a script will be provided as part of the Casting Brief. When a script is deemed commercially sensitive by the Client/Producer and cannot be released the Casting Director will provide as much material as is needed for the audition.  
  
(ii) In the case of Film & TV Drama/Comedy an audition script, a synopsis and character description will be provided to the Actors Agent and, when and where possible, an indication of the size of the role. In addition, the entire script or screenplay will also be made available to the Actors Agent at the discretion of the producer and director. This is not always possible. Eg scripts may not be finalised, and a draft can be misleading in character preparation.  
  
(iii) It is the responsibility of the Actor's Agent to provide all material specified in (i) & (ii) above to the auditioning Actor.  
  
(iv) It is the actor's responsibility to receive the script and other relevant material from their agent, and to prepare appropriately.

It is expected that an actor will read any scripts, synopses and character notes relevant to, and learn any dialogue necessary for, the audition. An actor can not expect to use audition time as preparation for a role.

- (v) It is required that all information about an audition, scripts, and product, be treated with utmost confidentiality by all parties.

### Accents

3. (i) The parties recognise the importance of providing the performer with an adequate opportunity to research and prepare where an accent is required for an audition. Instruction for an accent to be prepared will be given by the Casting Director to the Actor's Agent at least at the time of booking performers for an audition, if not before. There are many websites to provide guidance. eg. <http://web.ku.edu/~idea/index.htm>.  
<http://accent.gmu.edu/>  
  
(ii) It is expected that where an accent is specified that the actor will prepare their audition with that accent.

### Availability for Shoot Dates and Shoot Location

4. (i) Shoot Dates and Location will be specified by the Casting Director in the Casting Brief to the Actor's Agent.  
  
(ii) It is the responsibility of the Actor's Agent to inform the Actor of such shoot dates and location at the time of offering an audition.  
  
(iii) It is the Actor's responsibility to make sure they are aware of such shoot dates and location before they agree to an audition.  
  
(iv) Any known availability issues must be discussed with a Casting Director, via an Actor's Agent before an audition is confirmed.

## **GUIDELINES PART B – THE AUDITION**

### Privacy during the Audition

5. Auditions will be held in a private setting wherever possible, especially in the case of drama/film. There are however some circumstances where an audition may need to be held in a public space. This is especially so in the case of a TVC where an exterior location is required to demonstrate a special skill ie: skateboarding in a skateboard park or windsurfing at a beach etc, as appropriate.

### Professional Actor as Reader

6. The parties recognise the importance of allowing the performer to read in an audition with a professional actor. Where an Actor is auditioning for a leading role in a tv drama/film the Casting Director will make all reasonable attempts to ensure a professional performer is engaged as reader. Opportunity will be given to the auditionee to rehearse with the reader in the audition room. In all other cases, the Casting Director will provide whatever is necessary for the Actor in regard to props, eyelines, prompts etc.

### Direction/Treatment of the Script

7. (i) The actor will have an opportunity during the audition to discuss the role for which s/he is auditioning with the Casting Director.  
  
(ii) It is expected that the actor has already studied all available information given about their character and/or script for which they are auditioning and the purpose of this discussion is to clarify any queries arising out of such study, or to establish, if there is one, a preferred approach to the role.  
  
(iii) The performer may be asked to read for or improvise additional material if it is considered to be to the benefit of the audition.

### Identification on Tape

8. The performer will need to be identified on tape. The identification may be by graphics only, by name board or by verbal identification depending on the producer/director's brief to the Casting Director.

The performer will also be required to answer any questions the Casting Director may be required to ask which are relevant to the role or brief. This may include but is not limited to questions regarding availability for shoot, call backs, special skills required for the role. Such questions are dependent on the producer/director's brief to the Casting Director.

### Audition Times and Lengths

- 8b (i) Casting Directors will provide a specified day and time for an audition and it is expected that an auditioning performer will be on time for this audition and not be kept waiting unduly for their audition.  
  
(ii) The length of an audition will vary according to the size of the role and it is usually obvious from the script provided how long a performer will need

to allow for their audition time. In cases where a Casting Director knows that auditions will take longer than expected, they will inform the Actor's Agent in advance so that the performer can make an informed decision about their availability for an audition.

#### Actor Provided Auditions

9. (i) Actors Agents submit their actors in good faith that they are available for an audition at a location specified by the Casting Director in the Casting Brief.

It is the responsibility of an Actor to inform their Agent if they are no longer available for an audition in the city/town they usually reside in, or that they wish to be considered for auditions as if they are in situ.

If an actor submitted by their Agent, and offered an audition by a Casting Director, is unable to attend a specific audition because they are not in situ the actor may have the opportunity to provide, at their own expense, an audition on a format specified by the Casting Director, and to a deadline also specified by the Casting Director. This is to be referred to from now on as Actor Provided Auditions or APAs.

(ii) As it is the actor's choice to provide an APA at their expense, they retain the right to record their audition with or without assistance from other people (eg, a friend, a professional camera operator, a casting director, in a studio, out of a studio etc) without discrimination by the Casting Director, and without the person employed by the Actor to assist them, being in any way responsible to anyone other than the Actor for the quality of, or results of, the APA.

It is at the Casting Director's discretion as to whether they will accept APAs for any given brief.

(iii) In addition to the audition being an APA, in these circumstances, should the Actor be cast in the role, they are considered to be resident in the city specified in the Casting Brief, unless otherwise negotiated by the Actor's Agent before the audition takes place.

#### Actor's Declaration Form

10. (i) Where a cast form has been provided by the Casting Director for an actor to fill out prior to entering the audition room, it is expected that all information given by the Actor is accurate and true, especially with regard to availability for the shoot and previous experience.

(ii) In the case of TVCs it is essential that where asked actors declare all previous TVC roles for the time frame specified in the cast form so that any potential conflicts of interest are immediately apparent.

(iii) In some cases an actor will also be asked to declare any criminal convictions including driving offences and must do so honestly. The Declaration can be considered a legal document once signed.

(iv) The Casting Director expects the actor's agent to notify them if there are any potential conflicts which arise after the audition has taken place, eg another role offer or hold has occurred.

#### Notification of Results

11. (i) The Casting Director will advise the Actor's Agent of the results of the casting as soon as a decision has been made by production, unless the production contacts the Actors Agent directly. Where possible the Casting Director will let all relevant agents know that a script/role has been cast, whether an actor from their agency has been cast or not, in order for the Actor's Agents in turn to inform their performers who auditioned.

(ii) The Casting Director will notify the Actor's Agent of performers who are on a shortlist and/or recall list. The performer is then considered to be on a hold for that role. This hold excludes the possibility of the performer being able to contract for any other conflicting role without following the procedures in (iii) and (iv) below.

(iii) Where a conflict arises and a decision is still pending, a performer may be placed on a second hold for any other role offers. In such cases the Casting Director of the second hold will be notified of the first hold, and the Actor's Agent must also contact the Casting Director of the first hold and inform them of the second hold. This is so that all parties can make an informed decision.

(iv) In the situation of the second hold preceding the first hold in becoming a firm offer, the Actor's Agent will inform the Casting Director of the first hold in order to give them time to notify their client of the situation. The client must either come back with a firm offer or release within a recommended 24 hours. In the situation where the client has been informed of the situation, and cannot make a decision for whatever reason, then the second hold can be confirmed ahead of the first hold.

(v) Third and Fourth holds operate in the same way as for first and second.

(vi) The Actor's Agent will represent the performer in all negotiations and under no circumstances will a Casting Director negotiate directly with a performer or a performer's guardian, unless they are not represented by an Actor's Agent.

## **PART C – ACCESS TO RECORDS AND AUDITION TAPES**

### Use of Screen Test

12. No recording of an audition, APA, or screen test shall be used in any manner other than for the private viewing of the producer, director, or their nominee. The Casting Director may not show the recorded audition to another client without prior permission being granted by the performer's agent.
13. All notes, comments and or any records taken by the Casting Director of the performer's audition shall not be disclosed to any person other than the director and producer for whom the audition was conducted. No third party shall be permitted access to such material.
14. The Casting Director may show file audition tapes of the performer taken by the Casting Director at a previous audition where the Casting Director is suggesting the performer for a particular role or roles. This will only be done in consultation with the Actor's Agent.

## **PART C – FEES AND NEGOTIATIONS**

15. Recall fees will be paid where applicable for TVCs only.
16. Where the Casting Director is involved in negotiating the performer's contract they shall ensure that the Agent is supplied with a copy of the relevant producers contract.
17. It is understood that where fees and conditions have been outlined in a Casting Brief these are agreed to by the Agent when submissions are made by them to the Casting Director. If there are to be any exceptions/negotiations regarding any particular Actor/s or conditions, the Actors Agent must negotiate these in advance of an audition taking place. Fees may be negotiated where the role increases significantly or where conditions are altered beyond the intent of the original brief given to the Actor's Agent, and this includes situations where the scripts provided didn't accurately outline the size or significance of the performer's role.

## **PART D – OPERATING WITHIN THE BILL OF RIGHTS ACT 1990 & THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT 1993**

18. The Casting Director will not discriminate against any performer on any grounds including but not limited to age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religion or reputation, providing the performer has the qualifications appropriate for any given role, and a role may be defined by some of the above characteristics such as age, gender or ethnicity. Casting Directors retain the right to discern who is suitable to audition based on information supplied by the actor or agent, and in addition to information they have received from the director about the requirements for the role.