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### **Kiwis first ... but obviously not Kiwi performers**

New Zealand performers have today expressed their shock and disappointment over the decision to allow a US performer to enter the country and take work away from a New Zealander.

Under New Zealand's immigration laws, every film or television production wishing to import a performer needs to meet strict guidelines that are designed to ensure New Zealand performers are provided with opportunities to work on all productions. Yesterday the Government took the unprecedented step to allow the relatively unknown US actor Vincent Gallo to enter the country and work on a Steinlager Pure television commercial for New Zealand audiences being shot in Queenstown this week.

"This is an incredibly disappointing decision by the Government to allow Mr Gallo to enter the country and take a job away from a New Zealand performer," said NZ Equity President Jennifer Ward-Lealand. "Obviously when the government talks about 'Kiwis First' it applies to everyone except performers."

The production claimed that the actor Vincent Gallo was of international distinction and merit since he had worked with Johnny Depp and Martin Scorsese.

"International distinction relies on a performer's personal stature and work, not on the stature of those with whom he's worked," said Ms Ward-Lealand.

Every production seeking to import a performer must also undertake a casting exercise as legislated under immigration regulations.

"The casting process undertaken by the production company was ridiculous and designed to ensure no New Zealand performers would get the job. Agents were provided with misleading casting briefs seeking a UK-accented actor (not a US-accented actor as they have ultimately cast) and were told that no New Zealanders with any screen experience in the last three years need apply. There was no genuine intention to seek a New Zealander for the role."

"This decision is a slap in the face for all New Zealand performers and frankly shows contempt for all New Zealanders. Kiwi performers are Kiwi workers."

**For further information ring Frances Walsh, NZ Actors' Equity. Contact details below, or 021 606 638.**