



SUBMISSION: GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY – AUSTRALIAN SCREEN INDUSTRY:

SUBMISSION DATE: 9th March 2017

INTRODUCTION

I have been an actor, director and producer for over 35 years, I am also the CEO of Screenwise Film & TV School for Actors and a member of the International Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

Screenwise is an RTO and was established seventeen years ago to provide specialist, career-focused training in acting for film & television by employing the crème de la crème of industry professionals – award-winning actors, directors & casting consultants who are articulate and inspirational teachers. Screenwise offers full-time and part-time intensive creative and technical screen acting programs which are up to date with Australian and International film industry standards. It also offers the only full-time Diploma of Screen Acting in Australia. It's alumni include Chris Hemsworth (Thor), Stef Dawson (Hunger Games), Andy Whitfield (Spartacus) and Todd Lasance (Spartacus).

Screenwise has sponsored the Australians In Film's *Heath Ledger Scholarship* in Los Angeles for over four years now. This sponsorship ensures the Australian actor who wins the Scholarship can afford to live in LA, secure agency and manager representation and future work. In 2017 we also sponsored G'Day USA. These sponsorships have become pivotal for building a strong relationship between Screenwise and the American Screen industry to ensure Screenwise students have every opportunity to work in their chosen profession once they graduate. Of course this means travelling internationally to the U.S. because there simply isn't work here in Australia for them.

Film & Television is not only the actors bread and butter to sustain them through the hard times, it has become the actors main source of work in a very difficult and demanding profession.

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES

- Temporary Visa Application Process
- No VET Student Loan eligibility for screen actors in training

TEMPORARY VISA APPLICATIONS

For our Australian screen industry to survive and flourish we need to become competitive internationally. This would entail addressing some of the long term problems that are holding us back and killing our Screen Industry's potential. We need sensible reform options to ensure industry growth and sustainability. One of those options for the Committee to consider could be curbing union consultation over temporary visa applications. Well known international actors make projects more attractive and certainly more financially viable which leads to more productions and more work not only for the actors but for everyone involved in making feature films. Many actors and crew members have voiced their frustration and concern over the Union's involvement and the restrictions placed on productions. A high profile international actor guarantees a wider

audience and increased opportunities for our own local artists to be seen internationally.

For the Australian Screen Industry to survive and thrive we need to modernise our industry standards and align them with our global markets which will create more work for our local artists and crew.

VET STUDENT LOAN ELIGIBILITY

The Australian Federal Government's changes to the way VET Student Loans are administered has had a dramatic impact on the Australian screen industry. The recent changes have ended accessibility to VET Student Loans for Australian screen acting students. To sustain a \$5.8 billion screen industry, and to ensure ongoing production, producers need to be able to have access to highly trained professionals including screen actors. Like most students in other fields, screen acting students do not necessarily have economic means to allow them access to the training and education they need. These new VET changes have had a direct and negative impact on the quality and diversity of professional screen actors contributing to the way Australia presents its culture and tells its stories at home and abroad. No one who is serious about training and educating Australia's future professionals is suggesting that the VET Student Loans system should not have been reformed. And our industry fully supports the removal of any and all training and education providers who have not abided by the spirit and the law of the VET Student Loan program. What we are suggesting however is that the recent changes could seriously affect Australia's screen sector.

In a multicultural society not only do we need to provide work opportunities for those professionals who can contribute to our Screen Industry, we also need to provide the means for those individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds to have the professional training that our screen industry needs to

In a multicultural society our screen industry should be embracing diversity, however to do this it needs highly skilled professional screen actors. Diversity is currently compromised due to talented individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds being unable to train in their chosen profession of screen acting due to an ineligibility to apply for VET Student Loans. As an example of this, please find below links to a story concerning a very talented young indigenous actor called Jobe Adams who was forced to create a Go Fund Me Campaign in order to meet his screen acting course fees.

<http://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2017/02/10/gofundme-campaign-helps-young-actor-move-closer-dream>

The reality of the screen industry and its current challenges to finance and produce content to compete in a global industry means that budgets are increasingly lowered and schedules are tight. The result is that producers need to employ actors who understand the technical requirements needed for acting on a professional film or television set. This encompasses many things which include, shooting out of sequence, prop and emotional continuity, hitting marks, blocking, finding the light, cheating eyelines, frame sizes, shot sizes for example and post production. This type of training is not provided in a regular theatre or performing arts schools. Screenwise Film & TV School for Actors is the only school in Australia that offers actors this type of intensive screen acting training and it is a profound blow to the screen industry that it's students are ineligible for the Government's Student Loans Scheme.

I urge you to seriously consider the solutions I proposed as I firmly believe not only will it do justice to our screen industry, but will result in positive changes for our economy and sustainability.

Yours sincerely,
DENISE ROBERTS
CEO & Principal Director
Screenwise.

