



Christine McDonald
Committee Secretary
Senate Environment and Communications References Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

29 January 2018

Inquiry into Australian content on broadcast, radio and streaming services

Dear Committee Secretary

Thank you for your invitation to provide a submission to the Senate inquiry into Australian content on broadcast, radio and streaming services.

Screen Australia is the Australian Government's direct funding and administrative body for the Australian screen production industry. We are an independent agency that funds drama and documentary content on all screens, for Australians of all ages. We support quality projects of scale and ambition, projects of cultural value that are intrinsically Australian, and projects that encourage practitioners to innovate and embrace risk.

For more than fifty years, Australian governments have supported the screen industry to produce screen stories that the market would not otherwise provide. This support is provided because Australian screen content delivers tremendous cultural value to audiences of all ages. It informs our sense of who we are, offers unique forms of cultural expression and provides culturally significant experiences shared by millions of Australians. Quality local content can travel the world, shape our view of the world and the world view of Australia, and resonate for generations. To create content that makes these impacts, we need a vibrant, skilled and creative industry with an appetite for innovation.

Screen Australia supports high quality, culturally significant and innovative Australian content by:

- directly supporting a range of drama and documentary content across all platforms, for all ages. This includes feature films, television series, online content and innovative formats including VR;
- supporting the growth of screen businesses to promote a more sustainable industry;
- administering the Producer Offset, a refundable tax offset for producers of eligible Australian projects;

- supporting marketing and screen culture initiatives which focus on engaging audiences with Australian content;
- funding Indigenous talent and distinctive stories through our globally-recognised Indigenous Department;
- administering the Government's International Co-production Program, which encourages projects that are truly international in terms of story, budget and audience; and
- providing authoritative, timely and relevant data and research to the industry and government.

Screen production is one of Australia's leading creative businesses. The existence of a local industry delivers significant economic benefits – in 2014/15 the Australian industry contributed \$3 billion in value add to the economy, and more than 25,000 full-time equivalent jobs. The economic, audience and cultural value of Australian screen stories was measured in our report *Screen Currency – Valuing our screen industry*, which we have attached to this submission.

And while we have seen that Australians are hungrier than ever for more local content, the industry faces major challenges due to digital disruption. Audiences now watch what they want, when they want, on whichever screen they want – and many viewers are disinclined to pay. It is harder for content makers to 'cut through' fierce global competition and reach an audience, and the industry's traditional practices and revenue streams have been, and continue to be, disrupted.

These challenges are significant. But change also brings exciting opportunities. Screen Australia funds new ways of thinking about content, particularly through our online and multiplatform program, which has supported extraordinarily creative and risky approaches to storytelling that have achieved billions of views. And while some traditional content sectors are struggling, high-quality Australian features and series are achieving worldwide sales and awards in record-breaking numbers.

Continued government support and investment is essential – it ensures that a viable and thriving screen sector produces compelling Australian stories for audiences. The inquiries and reviews taking place in recent months provide an opportunity for the Australian Government to support the industry to be even more creative, flexible, resilient and audience-focused.

We would be delighted to provide further information in writing or in person to the Committee. To facilitate this, please contact

Yours sincerely

Graeme Mason
Chief Executive Officer