



RESPONSE TO SCREEN AUSTRALIA'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Executive Summary

- **The Australasian Natural History Unit**
ANHU applauds the Government's shift towards a greater focus on the economics of the industry and believes that the entire industry, including those making films that are less economically viable, will benefit from this;
- **Wildlife films**
Wildlife films are arguably the most economically viable of any genre of film or television in Australia yet have been poorly served by past government agencies. They are routinely sold in over 50 countries, generate millions of dollars in export income, can reach audiences in excess of 100 million and can make significant contributions to the environment, education, regional employment and international tourism;
- **Funding viable enterprises**
ANHU supports a substantial shift from prescriptive funding rounds to funding of enterprises, with a greater emphasis on track record as well as future projects;
- **Fewer, larger grants**
We would support a substantial shift from providing relatively small grants, with significant acquittal requirements, to single, larger grants with simplified acquittals;
- **More open funding opportunities**
Screen Australia should welcome a wide range of proposals from potentially viable film companies; it should be open to providing substantial finance packages and to a range of financing options from cash-flow loans to grants; and it should be much less prescriptive and more open in its approach to funding;

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- **Less administration**
A much higher proportion of government funding should reach the industry it is intended for; Screen Australia should be a streamlined facilitator of the industry and it should endeavour to outsource to the private sector and to industry guilds wherever possible;
- **Industry guilds**
Industry guilds play a valuable role within the industry and deserve greater recognition and greater levels of routine support from the new agency;
- **Genuine, ongoing consultation**
Much greater and more regular consultation with industry is needed. In fact, industry should be integral to decision-making processes at Screen Australia;
- **Training**
Private sector organisations and guilds should be given financial incentives to provide apprenticeships and to offer training; there should be a significant shift from government training to industry training;
- **Coordination throughout government**
In this of all industries, there needs to be a vastly greater level of coordination across all government departments. Ideally, Screen Australia should oversee all government expenditure on film, video and television productions, from international features to corporate videos.
Without such coordination, duplication, inefficiency and, worst of all, competition with the private sector is inevitable.
- **Illegal workers**
Australia is currently losing millions of dollars each year as a result of overseas film-makers working illegally in the country; even internationally-renowned broadcasters have been routinely flouting Australia's visa regulations for decades. This is one of the most critical issues facing the wildlife film-making sector; it threatens the viability of one of the most economically successful genres of the entire industry.
Screen Australia should liaise with the department of immigration, and ideally oversee all visa applications in this industry, to ensure that all visiting film-makers have the correct visas and that visas are only granted where it is in the best interests of Australia;



- **Regional Australia**

This is one of relatively few industries that can create sustainable employment throughout the entire country – from capital cities to remote communities. Yet the huge financial disincentives for any organisation based in regional Australia have been exacerbated by the operations of past federal film agencies.

There needs to be a recognition of the huge potential for regional employment in this sector and much greater support for the regions;

- **Inclusivity**

We believe Screen Australia should make fresh efforts to be inclusive of all genres as well as of all regions of Australia. Recognising the potential for growth and economic success throughout this sector, it should balance its traditional focus on drama features with the needs and values of all genres and its policies should look to be inclusive wherever possible – extending the boundaries of the traditional “screen industry” to include games developers and others who are part of this significant creative sector of the economy.



Background

The Australasian Natural History Unit is one of Australia's leading producers and distributors of high quality science and wildlife films, documentaries, animations and other multi-media content for screens of all sizes. It is a private sector company, representing some of Australia's most successful film-makers.

ANHU applauds the Government's shift towards supporting and rewarding successful film-making companies and towards a greater focus on the economics of this potentially enormous industry. We believe that if the most economically viable film projects are given greater support, then the results of such investment will provide the Government with many good reasons, and many export dollars, to support less viable projects.

Wildlife films are arguably the most successful genre of television. Yet they have been traditionally neglected by previous agencies:

- They do not rate in the government's published listings of Australia's most successful films and yet, by any objective assessment – of ratings, reviews, international distribution and, especially, audience reach – there are a dozen Australian wildlife films that rival the best-known Australian features;
- For all the film festivals around the country, there is not a single award for a wildlife film in Australia (with the possible, sole exception of an ACS craft award for cinematography);
- They have been declined government support, on a number of occasions, precisely because they are economically viable; &
- Wildlife film producers have been ineligible to obtain financial support to attend the key markets for their genre, unlike all other genres.

The advent of the Producer Offset provides Australian wildlife film-makers, for the first time ever, with reliable access to financial support from the Government. This is essential not because it enables the making of films that would otherwise not be made, but because it will enable Australia to compete in a marketplace where most major international players have been massively subsidised by their own governments for decades.

ANHU would like to be an active participant in providing advice to government, formulating policy for the industry, and in providing training opportunities, screen culture events and other benefits for the entire industry.

