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**SCREENAUSTRALIA**

**Sydney (head office)**

Level 4, 150 William Street

Woolloomooloo NSW 2011

Phone: + 61 2 8113 5800

Fax: + 61 2 9357 3737

Email to: [SOI@screenaustralia.gov.au](mailto:SOI@screenaustralia.gov.au)

Dear Screen Australia,

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on the enlightening draft Statement of Intent (SOI) document published on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

As an established Australian actor (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0999139/>), who has recently undertaken to produce his first feature film “All the Tired Horses” (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1222819/>) in Australia, prompted largely by the recent introduction of the Producer Offset, I am very encouraged by the proposed inherent flexibility as outlined in the draft SOI. With interest and funding for my project being attracted largely from foreign private investors, the ability to promote Screen Australia’s support for a project is equally and as vitally important to assisting with capital raising efforts, as is the opportunity to receive direct support from Screen Australia.

As a focus, what I consider to be of prime importance to growing and developing our industry is implementing mechanisms which will not only encourage new entrants and participants to undertake creative endeavors in the area of film-making, but also provide a basis for the active production of sustainable and competitively derived products.

To premise my comments here, I departed Australia shortly after graduating from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in 1991 for two reasons:

- a) To see what was happening in the rest of the world, and to learn from working with film makers from other parts of the world.
- b) To use my knowledge, once acquired from abroad, to further the development of efficient, practical and creative techniques within the Australian film industry and thus educate others who may not get the chance to travel abroad.

As a recent contributor to the Department of Culture and the Arts forums on Creativity in Perth held at the Art Gallery of WA, and having actively connected with ScreenWest and local film industry people in Western Australia, I am encouraged by the level of creative activity that is occurring, and this needs to be utilized and guided to produce successful results.

The development of guidelines in consultation with industry professionals is critical to making informed decisions and thus it is absolutely imperative so that “assessment of the level of any Agency funding should be flexible, taking into account the Producer Offset, market attachment, the commercial, cultural, artistic and critical merit of the project and its ability to reach a wide audience or a specific targeted audience in Australia”.

Distribution and marketing are areas that need to be addressed from a very competitive standpoint, as we now live in a global world of media leveraging that is significantly changed from just a few years ago; “Screen Australia will develop a suite of programs to increase the visibility and marketability of Australian screen productions both locally and internationally” – Australian producers must focus on producing Australian content that is not only uniquely entertaining for international audiences but also contains educated and pre-determined structural development parameters that provide commercially competitive opportunities to be fully exploited.

Screen Australia in the unique position of being able to provide hugely positive support for producers; public profile platforms for encouraging greater collaboration in the areas of co-productions, and concerted efforts to promote international co-productions especially amongst our close region neighbors (Japan, Hong Kong, Philippines, Singapore) are key areas to develop.

I applaud the proposition that “Screen Australia is giving consideration to introducing a bonus for small to medium budget feature films that achieve a measure of success at the box office. This bonus would be provided to the producer for investment in further projects.” – simply put, this notion is really the vortex to sustainability, and further to this proposition, I would recommend that such a bonus, if implemented, be structured in a way as to be proportionately relative to the project’s overall revenue receipts, thus incorporating other revenue-making distribution platforms. Greater financial success for a project, should allow successful producers to produce a larger body of work, and this in turn should provide greater creativity and diversity to arise.

Screen Australia’s unique position now allows greater cross fertilization of ideas to permeate across States borders and the efficient ability to work closely with all State agencies and other organizations, provides a very important medium of support for producers dealing with film-making parameters that often involve decisions that are particular to a specific location yet implemented using resources (crews and equipment) garnered or attained over a wider spectrum that focuses on the constraints of production budgets. Training and education of these aspects is vitally important to impart to new entrants.

I would be most happy to provide further support and information to the development of greater awareness of the opportunities that Australia has to further grow and thus increasingly create a highly successful and sustainable film and media industry. It is my firm opinion that our country definitely has the framework and resources to expand an industry employing many creative people, in which export revenues generated from the production of quality Australian media content can rival the largest of Australian export driven industries.

Thank you and with sincere regards,



James R. W. Smith (aka James With)  
Chairman  
TRI-US ENTERTAINMENT