

10 June 2014

Submission to Screen Australia's Enterprise Industry draft guidelines

Screen Producers Australia was formed by the screen industry to represent small-to-medium enterprises across a diverse production slate of feature film, television, games and interactive content.

As an employers association, we consult with a membership of almost 300 production businesses in the preparation of our submissions. This consultation is augmented by ongoing discussions with our elected Council and appointed Policy Working Group representatives. These members employ hundreds of producers, thousands of other practitioners and account for more than three-quarters of a billion dollars worth of production activity annually.

On behalf of these businesses we are focused on delivering a healthy commercial environment through ongoing engagement with elements of the labour force, including directors, writers, actors and crew, as well as with broadcasters, distributors and government in all its various forms. This coordinated dialogue ensures that our industry is successful, employment levels are strong and the community's expectations of access to high quality Australian content have been met.

Further to our submission dated 3 February 2014¹, Screen Producers Australia welcomes Screen Australia's new Enterprise Industry program.

In principle, we support Screen Australia's approach in the draft guidelines as it retains elements of the current program while also identifying new ways to refine and refresh broader industry growth and renewal objectives. Furthermore, we also support the introduction of a two-phased application process, as was suggested in our previous submission. The benefits of the 'expression of interest' round followed by an 'invitation to full application' are clear. It will reduce administrative cost to applicants and provide greater transparency about the ongoing focus of the program.

Many stakeholders are pleased that the 'growth' strand is looking at alternative distribution models and that 'stories' will potentially target some innovative properties. These are two areas in which Screen Producers Australia has been particularly vocal. However, in offering our support we also acknowledge that there remains a level of concern among stakeholders. This concern is concentrated to a large degree around a lack of clarity in the guidelines regarding the balance of funding across the strands and the maximum levels of funding per applicant within each strand.

¹ See: <http://screenproducersaustralia.org.au/advocacy/submission/>

It maybe a result of the unstable budget environment in which the draft guidelines were released, but it is almost impossible to comment on the overall balance of the program design without more details on how the funding will be apportioned. It should not be spread too thin, if it is this will undermine its ability to offer meaningful levels of support to individual businesses, which was critical factor to the success of previous program.

In addition to the queries regarding the spread of funding there has also been some concerns raised about the diversity of applicants, given that past recipients and non-producing entities are eligible for what already may be smaller allocations of funding. That said, this is less of a concern in relation to the 'people' and 'stories' strands as long as the initiatives supported have an absolute outcomes from the production sector.

In acknowledging these concerns, Screen Producers Australia is pleased with Screen Australia's ongoing commitment to enterprise-style support and we would welcome the opportunity to review further information prior to the finalisation of the guidelines.

Contact details

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