



**RESPONSE TO THE ENTERPISE DRAFT
GUIDELINES**

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Australian Directors Guild
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ABOUT THE AUSTRALIAN DIRECTORS GUILD

This submission is made by the Australian Directors Guild (ADG), the industry association representing the interests of film and television directors, writer/directors, documentary filmmakers, animators and independent producers throughout Australia. Formed in 1980, the ADG has hundreds of members nationally. These members include directors in feature film, television drama, documentary, animation and new media. They include some of the highest profile director in the world including BAZ LUHRMANN, PETER WEIR, GILLIAN ARMSTRONG, FRED SCHEPISI and PHILLIP NOYCE to name a few.

The ADG works to promote excellence in screen direction, to encourage communication and collaboration between directors and others in the industry, and to provide professional support for its members. It maintains a high profile and leading cultural and policy role through its efforts to address issues affecting the industry from a broad perspective.

The ADG is affiliated through the International Association of English-Speaking Directors Organisations (IAESDO) with the Broadcasting, Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union (BECTU), the Directors Guild of America (DGA), the Directors Guild of Canada (DGC), Directors UK, the Screen Directors Guild of Ireland (SDGI) and the Screen Directors Guild of New Zealand (SDGNZ).

The ADG is also a member of the Copyright Council.

Introduction

The Australian Directors Guild is very happy to respond to the draft guidelines, especially as it has been keen to expand the Enterprise Scheme to include directors of both documentary and drama. The ADG is concerned about the ongoing diminishing role of the director in Australia, particularly compared to other countries and, indeed, compared to the directors' role in the past.

We applaud the success of the Enterprise Scheme as a way to sustain the screen production industry but also lament the lack of inclusion of directors across the board. This is particularly so with the draft guidelines that we are commenting on in this submission.

We believe that the omission of directors in these guidelines is a fundamental flaw in their design and will not lead to more development of new projects but to less.

Background

The review of the Enterprise Scheme that was undertaken earlier this year provided an opportunity for those who work in the industry to comment on its successes and failures. Overall, the response from the industry has been positive but a number of areas for change and development have been highlighted in submissions by us and other industry organisations and individuals.

The ADG made a submission in January 2014, which outlined the director's view of the scheme and where changes need to be made. Based on this and other submissions Screen Australia has published the draft guidelines asking for further feedback on the scheme.

This is the ADG's submission.

As this was the first review of the Enterprise Scheme since its inception it was a good opportunity to review its success and failures. We believe that it has failed the director in Australia.

The Role of directors has been diminished over last 10 years

The role of the director in Australia seems to be being diminished, particularly with the Screen Agencies. When the ADG put forward its proposal for a Directors Attachment Scheme to Screen Australia 3 year ago it was as a direct response to the lack of programs that support directors. In fact over the past ten years of these programs supported by Screen Australia and its previous incarnations

(AFC and FFC) there have been very few specific initiatives for the development of directors.

We have also noted that the Screen Australia guidelines that allow directors to develop projects have become more restrictive. This is reflected in other jurisdictions across Australia within the state screen agencies.

For example in the development guidelines for feature film there is an emphasis on the producer applying for the finance. The guidelines states *“Screen Australia generally requires the commitment of an experienced producer as part of the team, and that the application should come from the producer”*¹.

It also allows for directors and director/writer teams but again emphasizes the need for a producer. Clearly development is favouring the producer. This reduces the number of projects that will be developed in Australia. Many directors’ agents who work with the ADG on an ongoing basis lament the lack of support for early stage development for directors on projects that do not need producers attached.

We also find that the Talent Escalator Program has a bias towards producers. In the list of programs to develop talent there is not one program for directors. The special programs are all for producers and are as follows:

- Filmnation **Producer** Placements;
- Scott Free London Creative **Producer** Placements;
- San Francisco Film Society **Producer** Placement;
- New York **Producer** Internship;
- Ted Hope **Producers** Placement.

We also note that when you go to the page on the website the role of Producer is seen as the main target for the program. It is not until you scroll down that you realize directors, writers and other could be eligible for support. Although not for any of the specialist programs listed above.

The ADG has been lobbying Screen Australia for several years on this issue and we were glad to see support for the Directors Attachment Scheme. It is a shame that this scheme is not listed in the Talent Escalator section of the website.

We were hopeful when the review of the Enterprise Scheme was announced that we would be able to redress some of these inequities in support for directors. Our submission outlined a number of issues and ways that this inequity could be addressed. When the draft guidelines were released the response from our members and our executive was one of astonishment. Directors are now in an

¹ Screen Australia Funding Guidelines, Development of Feature films, 2014.

even worse position to get support for projects and career development.

What is at the heart of what Screen Australia has proposed in these guidelines?

I refer to the two strands:

Enterprise People

*Targeted industry placements to advance the skills of early-career **writers** and **creative producers**.*

Enterprise Stories

*Encouraging ambitious and innovative large-scale development projects. **Stories** is open to a diverse range of initiatives to deliver ambitious and innovative large-scale development programs, aimed at capitalizing on the talents of experienced Australian **writers** and **creative producers**, and delivering high-quality, original market-ready scripts.*

In both these strands of Enterprise the director is omitted as someone who can contribute to the development of stories and as a professional worthy of developing projects with companies. We do not understand how this can be the case.

In our original submission in January 2014 we outlined how directors have found it incredibly difficult to develop ambitious stories as the funding guidelines restrict them from applying unless they have experienced producers attached.

In the survey done by Screen Australia in 2004 on development² it found that 34% of the projects were originated by writers, 7% by producers and 6% by directors.³ It also found that 21% were writer/directors and that 40% were also involved in all three roles (writer/director/producer).⁴

This shows that directors are vital in originating projects. They are also at the same level as producers when it comes to the source of development and when they are writer/directors; they are the dominant group originating projects.

This survey was only of feature films. We believe that if this applied to feature film and documentary the director's involvement in the originating of the story would be much higher. Certainly the fact that 40% were involved in all three roles indicates the importance of the director in the development process.

We would certainly understand if the only professionals to be included in this category were writers, then it would be clear that you are targeting the writing of scripts. But to include creative producers who in most instances find other

² http://afcarchive.screenaustralia.gov.au/downloads/policies/devsurvey_final.pdf

³ Development of Feature Films, Screen Australia. 2004. p.5.

⁴ *ibid.* p.5

peoples stories, whether they be novels, articles, scripts or pitches by directors seems absurd.

In the documentary field directors are dominant. The ADG membership consists of at least 30% documentary directors who also act as producers and writers. The exclusion of this group from the draft guidelines would mean a great many experienced documentary filmmakers would not be able to take advantage of the Enterprise Scheme.

In our submission to Screen Australia in January we outlined the need to expand the scheme to include directors. Specifically we advised:

Given that structural change to address the above issues does not solely lie within the remit of the Enterprise Companies it is worth trying to address some of the issues that the scheme has raised. In particular, the lack of support for single project filmmakers both in documentary and feature film production.

There is no doubt that an improvement in the way Enterprise Companies deal with independent directors and producers who are seeking to engage with them on project development would be desirable. Not all companies are the same and so it is probably not possible to develop guidelines specifically to solve this problem. But it would be worth engaging with the companies to see if they are able to develop partnerships with filmmakers that share the IP of various projects and enable them to develop and pitch one-off ideas that they can keep some control of in both the development and production, a sort of "Enterprise Partner" agreement.

We would also support the further investigation of "Gap Enterprise" that would target these filmmakers who in many cases only develop single projects whether they are features films or documentary.

Members of the ADG who work as feature film directors are always developing a multitude of projects and are always looking for production companies or producers to come on board to satisfy the development guidelines of Screen Australia. It seems absurd that directors of international standing cannot qualify to get development funding from Screen Australia unless they have a suitably acceptable producer on board.

This happens in the early stage of project development when a director is optioning a book or engaging a writer to start on an idea they may have developed or are writing the first draft of a script themselves. They cannot take the project to a company at such an early.

So what is the answer?

One solution to this would be the introduction of the suggested “Gap Enterprise” that would support directors of a certain standing to develop slates of projects. This could also apply to the one-off documentary directors who have small companies that produce some of the most exciting and diverse documentaries in the country. Filmmakers like Bob Connolly, Tom Zubyrcki, Jessica Douglas-Henry to name a few.

All of these filmmakers whether they be feature film directors, documentary directors or documentary producers have small viable businesses that have established themselves as leaders in the development of exciting and culturally diverse films.

We were therefore initially pleased about your introduction of Enterprise People and Enterprise Stories. The exclusion of directors was unexpected.

So why have directors been excluded? We do not know the answer.

The Impact on Screen Production by this decision

Because of enterprise funding having already gone to producers, those producers have initiated their own projects e.g. adapted novels etc. Therefore, it has become harder and harder for a director to get a producer attached to a project at an early stage

This means that directors have to either (1) write the project themselves (without funding), (2) hire a writer and fund the development themselves (very few directors can afford to do this or (3) not pursue the idea or project at all.

The combination of enterprise funding and current development guidelines results in a significant barrier to entry for directors (and writers) to bring new ideas to life. Put simply, it reduces competition for scripts in the market place

Less competition means poorer product. Bad for film industry, and bad for consumers (i.e. the audience). It also forces more directors to also become producers (for purely economic reasons – not because they want to!)

The Solution

We need to recognize that directors are significant originators of ideas in Australia and always have been. In recognition of this, we propose an enterprise strand purely for directors ‘ – Enterprise Gap as outlined in our January submission. This will be a small cost that will deliver far greater benefit to the industry on the whole. If this were not possible then we would urge Screen Australia to include directors in the two new strands along with producers and writers.

Kingston Anderson
Executive Director
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June 2014.