



via email
31st January 2014

Dear Screen Australia,

I am an independent, emerging producer based in Sydney, Australia. Despite not meeting eligibility criteria or guidelines for the Enterprise Program, I feel compelled to write a short, concise point of feedback as you are currently reviewing the program and seeking comments, which I believe do include, emerging screen producers and practitioners.

Firstly, I am very thankful for the generosity Screen Australia has demonstrated in the careers of emerging producers through Talent Escalator Program. The international placements are a fantastic way for emerging screen professionals to upskill and network with big industry players and reinvigorate the Australian film industry.

However, what's lacking in this current funding streams is: - *'Where to from here?'*

This is where it ties into Enterprise program for younger, rising independent producers that return to Australia full of beans, with international industry experience and contacts eager to make their first feature film, documentary or television series.

I spent a wonderful 6-months working for a busy and well-serviced production company in Toronto, Canada. Sure, there was part of me that wanted to remain in an industry that was busier and much more invigorating than what I was accustomed to. However, I am both resilient and passionate about producing films in my own country, and wish to co-produce with other countries with a firm base in Australia.

My point here is that emerging screen professionals are too often encouraged to branch out and see the world in the hope that we will perform well internationally and then on the off chance, may produce the odd project here or there on their home turf. Or conversely, feel the only avenue to independent producing is working for an already well-established production company – of which I can possibly count using one hand in Australia.

In fact, numerous talented and emerging screen professionals are flocking to the US in record numbers. This isn't a bad thing, as the learning curve will be steep and the move towards “global storytelling” will move in leaps and bounds over the coming years. However, it makes me increasingly nervous about the future of independent producing in Australia, or put simply “who will be independently producing films in the next 20 years?”



The current system simply isn't engaging or sustaining a career for our emerging producers to thrive in Australia. There simply isn't the work, nor the money.

For me, I've returned to Australia with a FULL slate of features projects but no chance at an income, let alone a regular income. I am living just slightly above the poverty line.

Getting by on \$1000-\$2000 of development funding through my projects as a producer fee just is not feasible. It's not a way to thrive a business, a company, a major player in the screen business in 10-15 years time.

I ask Screen Australia to consider the "Where to now?" for our young talented screen professionals that return from international placements, or are committed to making their first or second feature film with industry experience under their belt. Or ones that perform exceptionally well at international film festivals, with their short film or feature film. Is there only chance at growing a sustainable career through small pockets of development funding or a producers fee in production?

I'd like to propose some solutions, which may address the above and be worked into the next phase of Enterprise funding.

- 1) Set-aside a small pool of enterprise funding for independent screen producers starting a new business, in a competitive environment, whereby the eligibility criteria is *experience* based NOT feature credit or top-tier festival based.
- 2) Follow the lead with Screen NSW by offering a similar producer placement program, but at a leading production company where emerging producers can work 1-2 days a week and still manage their own slate of projects
- 3) Use a small portion of the Enterprise funding to go towards Media Mentorship. Mentorships are clearly lacking in the Australian film industry and all too often screen practitioners are "re-inventing the wheel" we need to learn, grow and be inspired by our industry greats. But there has to be an incentive. For successful Enterprise companies, make it contingent to set aside \$20,000 for a 6-month placement with an emerging producer to work with the company and form a mentorship relationship. This could possibly lead into an EP role on their next major work.
- 4) Smaller slate funding programs for growing companies. Emerging producers and production companies and collectives should be able to put their hand up for a small pocket of non-recurrent funding based on their slate, genre, platforms and innovative concepts. As mentioned meager producer fees and overheads that come out of



development funding through screen agencies barely cover the cost of the producers overheads and therefore leaves young production companies with very little resources to grow and expand and promotes the growth of “single entities” in the Australian film industry.

4) Use some of the Enterprise funding to solely send emerging producers to film markets, particularly co-production markets. Attending markets opens up the possibilities for emerging/rising producers, it's an opportunity for them to develop relationships with potential co-producing partners, financiers, investors and sales agents. It is invaluable. All too often Australians cannot afford the luxury of travelling to these markets and reap the benefits of attendance; we simply fall off the bandwagon or become out of touch with what's sought after in the marketplace. By providing more funding to attend markets (through an enterprise program fund) producers can be “in touch” on a global scale and avoid insular producing.

The above all goes hand in hand with eligibility criteria for feature film funding. That is to attract an Executive Producer to your feature film project. From a personal perspective this process is extremely time consuming and bogs down development, sometimes to the detriment of the project, it also forces the emerging producer to lose momentum on the project too - particularly if there is marketplace attachment or interest.

There is no doubt that the Enterprise Program has serviced and strengthened the Australian filmmaking community, and will continue to do so. As an emerging independent producer I ask that the reviewers keep smaller, growing entities in mind, the ones that need it in order to not only thrive in the industry, but survive.

I thank you for the opportunity to engage the screen producing community on the future of Enterprise program and sincerely wish you the very best in the process.

Warmest regards,
Raquelle David
Producer