

10 June 2014

Screen Australia

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To Whom It May Concern:

## **RE DRAFT GUIDELINES FOR COMMENT: ENTERPRISE INDUSTRY**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these draft guidelines.

Overall, we are disappointed by Enterprise Industry, which appears to be quite prescriptive, to diminish the control of company directors, and to fracture a pot of money that has been steadily decreasing since Enterprise began with a bang in 2009 by investing up to \$1 million in certain companies.

We understand the purpose of Enterprise to be to foster sustainability by resourcing ambitious business plans with achievable KPIs. Even in its most recent incarnation – which saw the median investment decrease considerably – Enterprise offered company directors the ability to steer the ship with confidence over the mid term and avoid the usual modus operandi of lengthy application processes for piecemeal bits of money.

While it's difficult to comment on these guidelines when there are no maximum requests indicated, our reading of Enterprise Industry is that, rather than investing in holistic business plans, it will fracture the allocated funds so that more companies can apply for less money for very specific (heavily prescribed) projects.

Nor does Enterprise Industry 'future-proof the Australian screen sector', which was one promising suggestion put forward in the discussion paper published last year, and it's very disheartening for an emerging business like ours to see that previous recipients of Enterprise, some of whom have been very generously funded indeed, will be able to dip into this new

allocation. The suggestion that Screen Australia is 'not likely to prioritise' such applications is not very reassuring.

We do welcome the proposal for a two-stage application process, which we hope will lessen the administrative burden on businesses. However as all businesses need to engage in all three types of activities you've identified – people, stories and growth – it follows that business would need to apply to all three strands, thus tripling the application process.

Aquarius Films are grateful recipients of Screen Australia's feature film slate funding initiative, Feature Enterprise for 2013 and 2014, which we have spent on a range of activities covering 'people', 'stories' and 'growth'. This has included hiring two new assistants, optioning new work and attracting a new producer to the team, Cecilia Ritchie. Feature Enterprise has given us the means to develop some very promising projects, including Polly's first feature film *Berlin Syndrome* from screenwriter Shaun Grant (*Snowtown*) and director Cate Shortland (*Somersault, Lore*), which is currently financing, and Angie's second feature film *Lion*, directed by Garth Davis (*Top of the Lake*), which Aquarius is producing in association with See-Saw Films. We would not have been able to grow the business to this exciting stage without this much-needed investment across our full slate of projects. Thus we can attest confidently to the importance of slate funding.

In summary, Aquarius Films would prefer Screen Australia to remain faithful to the spirit of Enterprise by backing the business plans of a smaller number of excellent screen businesses.

Yours sincerely

Angie Fielder, Polly Staniford & Cecilia Ritchie

Aquarius Films

Via email