
MEDIA RELEASE

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www.screenaustralia.gov.au

Screen Australia open for co-production business

Thursday 17 June 2010: Screen Australia today released draft guidelines for the International Co-production Program that incorporate a number of changes aimed at increasing flexibility.

“Screen Australia wants to ensure that Australian filmmakers have the greatest possible chance of working with the best international talent to produce stories that engage and entertain global audiences,” said **Ruth Harley**, Screen Australia’s Chief Executive. “Co-production status allows a feature film access to the 40% Producer Offset. This access to a generous Government rebate combined with the increased flexibility of the guidelines will make working with Australian practitioners on official co-productions internationally appealing. The proposed changes will help to increase the level of production in Australia and ensure greater sustainability.”

The key proposed changes include:

- The ability, subject to the terms of the relevant treaty, for a **writer from outside the co-producing partner countries** to contribute to a screenplay as long as he or she is not a *credited writer* of the screenplay (as that term is understood by the Australian Writers Guild or equivalent organisation). This is a change from Screen Australia’s current guidelines, which make a project ineligible for co-production status if a non-party writer has worked on the script in any way. Screen Australia is confirming with the Government that this is within the terms of the treaties and memoranda to which Australia is a party.
- A **revision of the points test** by which the Australian creative contribution is assessed. The total number of points has been increased, and up to five points (four for documentaries) are *discretionary points*, and can be allocated based on the roles most appropriate to the particular production. This change establishes recognition of the contribution of creatives who are not allocated points under the current points test such as VFX and sound designers. It will also allow the nationality of the source material to be taken into account if the producer so chooses.
- The provision for Australian co-producers, prior to securing finance, to apply to Screen Australia for a non-binding **letter of preliminary compliance**. The producer will be able to present this letter to financiers to indicate that the project is on the right track to be approved as a co-production. The introduction of the letter of preliminary compliance is intended to address some of the concerns raised in Screen Australia’s review regarding financier caution around committing funds before receiving formal advice regarding a project’s co-production status.

The draft guidelines are available at www.screenaustralia.gov.au/coproductions. Screen Australia has undertaken extensive consultation regarding these proposed changes over the last four months. Australian practitioners are invited to submit any last written comments to coproreview@screenaustralia.gov.au by COB **Friday 25 June**.

From 1 July 2010, the administration of the International Co-production Program will be undertaken by a combined Producer Offset and Co-production Unit. This will align the administration of the Co-production and Producer Offset programs so that they can provide an effective and efficient service to applicants.

It is anticipated that the guidelines will come into effect in early July pending the outcome of the final consultation phase.