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MEDIA RELEASE

Screen Australia announces development funding for 22 new projects

Wednesday 26 February 2020: Screen Australia has announced almost \$750,000 of Story Development funding for nine feature films, 11 television series and two online projects.

The slate includes Kate Miller-Heidke composing for Imogen Banks' new musical dramedy; a television adaptation of Melanie Cheng's acclaimed book *Australia Day*; and a feature film from Helpmann Award-winning playwright S. Shakthidharan.

Screen Australia's Head of Development, **Nerida Moore** said, "We are looking for projects that are distinctive in the market, have a very specific audience in mind and reflect a range of Australian experiences. As such, it's fantastic to be able to support the development of these 22 productions, which give an exciting glimpse into the diversity of stories, formats and genres we will hopefully see on our screens in the coming years."

"I'm particularly pleased Screen Australia is able to support creators to expand their skill sets and take creative risks, including actors Lucy Durack and Maria Angelico teaming up as writers on *Unbeweavable* and *The Letdown's* Alison Bell moving into longer-form television with drama series *Australia Day*."

The projects funded for development include:

- ***Aparna***: A feature film about Sri-Lankan woman, Aparna and her son who were separated during Sri Lanka's civil war and years later reunited in modern day Sri Lanka. Written and directed by S. Shakthidharan whose play *Counting and Cracking* won Best New Australian Work at the Helpmann Awards in 2019, *Aparna* is told in English, Tamil and Sinhalese and features musical and dance numbers. This heartwarming drama is also written by Dr Jeyasingham Jeyamohan, produced by John Maynard ([Jirga](#), [Romulus My Father](#)) and executive produced by Bridget Ikin ([Sherpa](#)).
- ***Australia Day (working title)***: A six-part television series adapted from the award-winning collection of short stories by Melanie Cheng, which weaves together narratives of the diverse Australian experience. The series begins when a person is stabbed late one night and an unlikely bunch run to their aid. These strangers come together by chance and, experiencing a connection in this moment of crisis, their lives are changed for the better. This project is written by Alison Bell ([The Letdown](#)) and Niki Aken ([The Hunting](#)), and is produced by Martha Coleman and Lauren Edwards of Revolver Films ([Diary of an Uber Driver](#)).
- ***Butch***: A six-part online comedy series that follows ex-lovers, Tiff and Gem who are forced to work together to co-parent their all-knowing (and talking) dog, Butch. While Tiff and Gem try to get back out into the dating scene, Butch goes to drastic lengths to bring them back together. This series is created, written and produced by Holly Austin and Zoe McDonald whose credits include writing for [Open Slather](#). They are joined by director Harry Lloyd ([What It's Like to be Queer](#)), along with producers Jamie Hough ([Acute Misfortune](#)) and Jenni Tosi ([How To Stay Married season 2](#)).
- ***Hair***: A seven-part online magic realist comedy about 21-year-old Geraldine who opts for laser hair removal only to discover an incredibly hairy young woman trapped in her shower drain. Geraldine's reluctance to accept her new-found friend's hairiness begins to expose the tangled relationship she has with her hair and with herself. The creative team features debut writer/director Mohini Herse (director of Instagram series [The Out There](#)), producer/writer Yingna Lu ([Tangles and Knots](#)) and producer's attachment Lottie Aspinall ([Don't Forget To Go Home](#)) with contributions from Michelle Law ([Homecoming Queens](#)), and writer Natasha Pincus ([Fell](#)).
- ***Lucy's Cannon***: A 52-part animated children's series from Blue Rocket Beyond, a joint venture between Tasmania's Blue Rocket Productions and Beyond Entertainment, about eight-year-old Lucy and her brother Randall who embark on far flung adventures by blasting out of an old-fashioned cannon. Together they travel into the extraordinary world of their imagination, meeting new friends along the way. Written by Wendy Hanna ([Dumbotz](#)) and script edited by Clare Madsen ([The Justine](#)).

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[Clarke Show](#)), *Lucy's Cannon* is directed by David Gurney ([Dumbotz](#)), produced by Alicia Rackett and co-produced by Paul Moran who collaborated on [Moments of Clarity](#).

- **Unbeweavable:** An eight-part television series that follows the unlikely friendship between Anna, a Christian who is questioning her faith in God, and Josie, a hairdresser who is haunted by visions of her late grandmother. When the pair meet, they discover that they share electrifying, psychic visions in the form of choreographed musical numbers. While they can't agree on what these visions mean, both Anna and Josie understand the potential of their newfound power. This musical dramedy sees writers Maria Angelico and Lucy Durack who performed together in [Sisters](#), team up with [Sisters](#) co-creator Imogen Banks who will produce. Also attached are director Corrie Chen ([Homecoming Queens](#)) and composers Kate Miller-Heidke and Keir Nuttall (*Muriel's Wedding: The Musical*). The series will also provide a mentorship opportunity for associate producer, Emelyne Palmer.

For the complete list of development funding approvals, refer to [television](#), [online](#) and [feature film](#) breakdowns.

ABOUT STORY DEVELOPMENT FUNDING

In July 2018 Screen Australia announced [changes to the Story Development guidelines](#) to make it easier for emerging creators to obtain funding. Projects for any platform including TV, film and online, can apply for development funding from one of two program strands - the Generate Fund or the Premium Fund.

The [Generate Fund](#) is for lower budget projects with an emphasis on new and emerging talent, or experienced talent wanting to take creative risks. The [Premium Fund](#) is for higher budget projects of ambition and scale from successful screen content makers.

Development funding decisions are made on an ongoing basis rather than rounds, so slate announcements include projects funded at different times. For a guide to understanding funding announcements, [see here](#).

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