

Screen Australia announces over \$1.7 million for seven documentaries

Wednesday 29 November 2023: Screen Australia has announced three documentaries funded through the Commissioned Program and four projects through the Producer Program that will share in over \$1.7 million of production funding.

Among the projects are *Deeper* that follows Thai Cave Rescue divers Richard Harris and Craig Challen on their fascinating exploration of the deepest freshwater cave in the world; NITV feature *Skin in the Game* which dives into the highly-contested world of rugby league and women's sport in Australia – hosted by proud Gamilaroi and Dunghutti woman and rugby league royalty, Marlee Silva; *Floodland* documents Australia's most flood-prone postcode of Lismore and the aftermath of the 2022 floods; and SBS documentary *Osher Günsberg: My Journey Beyond Pain*, the follow-up to [Osher Günsberg: A Matter of Life and Death](#).

Screen Australia Head of Documentary **Alex West** said, "From exploring the natural phenomena and the power of Mother Nature to the complexity of our minds and bodies, this diverse collection of documentaries is not to be missed. We are proud to be supporting such talented creatives in our shared mission to bring voices from all walks of life to the screen and are excited that viewers will have the opportunity to be immersed in these deeply personal stories."

The projects funded through the Commissioned Program are:

- ***Osher Günsberg: My Journey Beyond Pain*:** This one-hour follow-up to *Osher Günsberg: A Matter of Life and Death* for SBS follows presenter Osher Günsberg as he undertakes a personal investigation into his own pain journey and where he not only meets people living with chronic pain and explores new treatments, but also those who enjoy pain and seek it out. David Galloway ([War on Waste](#)) is writing/executive producing, with Ashley Davies ([Could You Survive on the Breadline?](#)) and Leonie Lowe ([Osher Günsberg: A Matter of Life and Death](#)) also attached as executive producers. *My Journey Beyond Pain* is funded in association with SBS. It is financed with support from Screen NSW. International sales will be managed by Escapade Media.
- ***Skin in the Game*:** This 60-minute documentary for NITV follows Marlee Silva, a proud Gamilaroi and Dunghutti woman who grew up in the world of rugby league as the daughter of legendary footballer, Rod 'Rocket' Silva. Now, as an emerging sports commentator and media star, Marlee dives into the highly-contested world of rugby league and women's sport in Australia to ask where we are heading as a nation. *Skin in the Game* is written and directed by Dena Curtis (*A League of Her Own*), with Marlee Silva (*Tiddas 4 Tiddas*), Laurie Critchley and Georgia Woodward of [Magda's Big National Health Check](#) executive producing. It is financed in association with NITV, with support from Screen NSW and the Shark Island Institute.
- ***Australia: An Unofficial History*:** This three-part series for SBS cracks open a forgotten vault to reveal the stories and pictures of Australia as it went through a startling transformation in the 1970s. This documentary depicts a country that resisted change for so long and highlights what eventuated into the modern nation we now know - exploring the difficulties that underrepresented groups living in Australia experienced and the gains they made that now need to be protected. *Australia: An Unofficial History* is from writer/director Chris Eley ([Designing a Legacy](#)), director Pauline Clague ([When Colin Met Joyce](#)), director Ili Baré ([Australia's Open](#)) and producers Jo-anne McGowan ([River, Mountain](#)) and Rebecca Bennett ([Ghosthunter](#)). It is financed in association with SBS with support from the National Film Sound Archive (NFSA), Screen NSW and The Post Lounge. International sales will be managed by ABC Commercial and post, digital and visual effects are supported by Screen NSW.

The projects funded through the Producer Program are:

- ***Deeper*:** This feature-length documentary follows heroes of the Thai Cave Rescue, Dr Richard "Harry" Harris and his dive partner Dr Craig Challen, as they challenge themselves to solve the mystery of one



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MEDIA RELEASE

of the world's deepest freshwater cave systems, New Zealand's Pearse Resurgence. As they tackle the last frontier of exploration, pushing to record depths in a cold, dark and scary underworld, they will test the relationships of those closest to them, including each other. Attached is writer/director Jennifer Peedom ([Sherpa](#)) and producer Blayke Hoffman (International Emmy Award-winning [Harley & Katya](#)). Sarah Noonan (*OneFour: Against All Odds*) and Jo-anne McGowan ([Mountain](#)) are attached as executive producers. It is financed in association with Screen NSW who are also supporting post, digital and visual effects. Local distribution is by Madman Entertainment, with K2 studios managing international sales.

- **Floodland:** A feature-length documentary following Australia's most flood-prone postcode of Lismore, after it was shattered by its worst-ever catastrophe in 2022. *Floodland* goes beyond the headlines of the most expensive climate disaster in Australia's history and asks whether the region as we know it can survive. In the struggle for the soul of Lismore, Bundjalung leaders emerge with a different vision, where First Nations knowledge plays a vital role in healing, planning and respecting the rivers. Through the story of *Floodland*, audiences are confronted with a challenging history and an uncertain future that affects us all. Writing/directing is Jordan Giusti ([Reptile](#), [Grevillea](#)) and co-writing is Joseph Nizeti ([River](#)). Also attached are producers Gal Greenspan and Rachel Forbes and executive producer Alice Burgin, whose credits include [The Defenders](#). It is produced in association with VicScreen. Local distribution is managed by Bonsai Films, with post, digital and visual effects supported by Blue Post.
- **The Musical Mind a portrait in process:** Inspired by the 25th anniversary of his movie [Shine](#), writer/director Scott Hicks explores the creative process of four elite international musicians in this feature-length documentary. With unprecedented access to their private worlds, the film celebrates how each neuro-atypical artist expresses their unique creativity, power and pain of their art with passion, emotion and humour. *The Musical Mind a portrait in process* is produced by Kerry Heysen (*The Lucky One*), written/co-produced by Jett Heysen-Hicks and executive produced by David Chiem ([Limbo](#)) and Mikael Borglund ([John Farnham: Finding the Voice](#)). It is funded in association with the South Australian Film Corporation (SAFC) and financed with support from the Adelaide Film Festival Investment Fund. Local distribution by Bonsai Films with international sales managed by Banijay Rights. It was developed with the assistance of SAFC, who also supported post and digital effects.
- **Welcome to Yiddishland:** A feature-length observational documentary about a global movement of artists as they revive the ancient and endangered Yiddish language, to share an inclusive and progressive understanding of their world. Guided by the experience of a cross-cultural youth choir as they learn and finally perform new Yiddish songs at the world's leading Yiddish arts festival in Germany, *Welcome to Yiddishland* follows theatre directors, writers, musicians, and performers as they unlock and transmit the hard-learned lessons of their ancestors. It is written and directed by Ros Horin ([The Baulkham Hills African Ladies Troupe](#), [Rosemary's Way](#)) and produced by Jeff Daniels ([Television Event](#), [Fair Game](#)). It is financed with support from Philanthropy via Documentary Australia. It was developed with the assistance of VicScreen and Screen NSW, with Label Distribution managing local distribution.

The full list of documentary blocklines is available [here](#).

The latest projects funded for documentary development are available [here](#).

DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION STATISTICS

The Documentary Production statistics on [Fact Finders](#) have been updated to include an analysis of Australian titles that went into production in the 2021/22 financial year.

The data shows that 207 titles were produced in 2021/22 generating 562 hours of content - 9% above the 5-year average. Total budgets for documentaries that commenced production in 2021/22 was a record high at \$247 million, with an 8% increase on 2020/21. Budgets were also 17% above 5-year average.

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For the full statistics on documentary storytelling in Australia, click [here](#).

ABOUT DOCUMENTARY FUNDING AT SCREEN AUSTRALIA

The [Documentary Producer program](#) is designed to give producers the foundational funding required to leverage their projects creatively and commercially. It must have a clear path to audience but marketplace attachment is not required at the application stage.

The [Documentary Commissioned program](#) is designed to support the production of a diverse range of quality projects for television broadcast, SVOD or similar. It must offer a compelling vision with a clear and enduring cultural value, and have a local presale with a minimum license fee at application stage.

The [Documentary Development program](#) aims to assist documentary makers in achieving planned outcomes for the development of their projects. Screen Australia also supports documentary projects through targeted initiatives such as [Fresh Cuts](#) with the Australian International Documentary Conference (AIDC) and Curious Australia with SBS.

Documentary projects that have a primary release on a social media platform are able to apply for funding through the [Online Department](#).

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