

Comment on Stage 2 of Screen Australia's review of operations from Oscar Scherl

Applause for publishing the Terms of Reference, most film industry participants, outside the inner circle, would not have known of all the good programs on offer within Screen Australia.

Overview on the Marketing Support Program.

Following on from the positive direction of the Stage 1 Guidelines, now focusing more on the business of film production, I would like to see a less convoluted marketing program, focusing on helping the independent producers to market their completed films.

My first suggestion is that, if all the programs are kept or not, there is a Manager guiding and assisting the enquirer through the maze of programs available. This would save costs and much time for both parties.

Do producers really need retrospectively applicable events like 'Marketing Workshops', 'Domestic Pitching'?

The marketing elements, eg 'Sales', 'Promotion', 'Library' and 'Digital learning' should surely be part of the 'in-house' (SA) budget allocations for these films and coordinated with the ABC and Educational Institutions, they have little to do with the independents who want their films marketed.

Perhaps there can be one program embracing the cultural film promotion, a good thing, specifically the 'Embassy Roadshow', 'G'day USA' but am not too sure about 'Industry and Cultural Development funding programs'.

The remaining programs are the most positive ones, assisting the producers to market their films. Although assistance to distributors should be limited, let them take a little risk. Personally I'm very much in favour of 'wholesaling' in international territories, since my experience is such that the producer or financier sees little returns from them, if any. A web page with all the new films, not just the SA supported ones, plus constant promotion of the web page, would enormously help with marketing the films, before and after completion. The idea is for the international distributor to come to the producer and make an offer!

I believe there should be greater emphasis by SA to assist producers to sell and distribute their films locally as widely as possible, without distributors involvement. The 'Regional Screen Network' is an excellent idea and must continue.

Research and Statistics

Again, I think that a Manager of this division should be responsible to shortcut and guide enquirers to the right section. This will save money, time, 'buckpassing' and duplication for both parties.

There is not much to comment on the positive programs of this division of SA, except, please do not publish individual films box office takings, they are invariably false, are lies, do never reflect the true returns and help to make financiers and investors hate the industry, as they don't understand the role of the exhibitor and the distributor.

To add an idea. A principle tool of marketing is the 'Certificate of Origin', this should be issued by SA and with the co-operation of two government authorities, perhaps the Certificate could include the film's viewer grading status (G, AO etc) in Australia? Just a thought!

I look forward to reading the final guidelines.

Oscar Scherl
Producer / Executive Producer
