

Screen Australia announces \$1.2 million of development funding for 32 projects

Tuesday 20 December 2022: Screen Australia has announced 19 feature films, 11 television dramas and two online projects that will share in over \$1.2 million of Story Development funding. The projects include [Moja Vesna](#) writer/director Sara Kern's new feature film *A Way Away*, children's sci-fi animated series *Combatoms* and *Just Chidi Things* from writer/producer/lead actor Chika Ikogwe, producer Ana Tiwary and executive producer Rose Byrne.

This slate includes 19 projects supported through the Generate Fund and 13 through the Premium Fund.

Screen Australia's Head of Development **Louise Gough** said, "We are excited about this distinctive mix of projects and the range of audiences and markets they intend to serve. We are proud to support creatives as they expand their body of work across a range of platforms and formats. This includes debut feature films from Jack Dowdell, a 2019 Developing the Developer recipient, and writer/director Bradley Slabe who created the award-winning short film *Lost & Found*."

Screen Australia's Head of Online **Lee Naimo** said, "We love seeing Online creators taking advantage of the opportunities we provide to incorporate development into their project plans. It's great that the creative team behind the hugely-popular TikTok and YouTube series *The Formal* will no doubt be growing their already enthusiastic following with new series *Kick It*, as well as Nicholas Colla and Nicolette Minster from *Deadbeat Ends Meet* teaming up with emerging creators. We encourage more online creators to talk to us early about Screen Australia's development support."

Joining Screen Australia's Development Unit is Development Executive Tanya Mukerjee who started last month. Tanya has previously worked in the corporate sector as a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Lead, at BBC Television in London as a Diversity & Inclusion Specialist, Executive Manager at Creative Diversity Network, which saw her work across the UK television broadcaster and productions sectors, and at ITV as Diversity Partnerships Manager. Tanya also previously worked as a Script Editor on programs such as [Fireflies](#) and in script roles on [Water Rats](#) and [McLeod's Daughters](#) and brings a wealth of story and sector knowledge to the role.

The projects funded for development include:

- ***A Way Away*:** A feature-length drama about 11-year-old Rana who is determined to do the 'grownup thing' and help provide for her family after her mum becomes injured and is unable to work. In an effort to keep her abusive uncle and current provider for the family away from her mum and sister, Rana's story is one of a brave young girl and a family standing united to end the cycle of abuse. *A Way Away* is writer/director Sara Kern's second film, after the critical success of her debut feature [Moja Vesna](#), which premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival 2022 and had its Australian premiere at the Melbourne International Film Festival. Gal Greenspan, who also produced [Moja Vesna](#), is attached as producer.
- ***Combatoms*:** A 13-part sci-fi action/adventure series, which follows a group of kids who discover super powered creatures that have escaped from a secret lab in their small town. When they learn a mysterious corporation plans to unlock their ability to control the very fabric of reality for sinister means, the kids must race to protect the *Combatoms* and harness their amazing powers to save the world instead. *Combatoms* is created by Charlotte Rose Hamlyn ([Space Nova](#)), directed by David Peers ([Happy Feet](#), [Ron's Gone Wrong](#)) and produced by Katrina Peers ([Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole](#)) who together form production company Big Serious Studios. It is written by Hamlyn and AWGIE award-winning writer John Armstrong ([Motown Magic](#)).
- ***Just Chidi Things*:** An eight-part comedy series following Chidi, a bubbly, irrepressible 23-year-old Nigerian medical student who carries the weight of her family's expectations on her shoulders. After being suspended from med school, Chidi does whatever it takes to avoid disappointing her parents - going on a series of misadventures to maintain the lie and keep her parents happy. Writer/producer



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and lead actor Chika Ikogwe ([Heartbreak High](#)) is joined by producer Ana Tiwary (*One of the Good Ones*, [Rhapsody of Love](#)) and executive producer, Rose Byrne ([Seriously Red](#)). Also attached is Alexandra Cullen as script editor.

- **Take My Hand:** A feature length sitcom/drama about Noah, a newly married young professional with Cerebral Palsy now building a life with his wife, Libby. Noah works in advertising and is offered a dream promotion, the only catch is the requirement to play the 'disability card' and take advantage of the disabled community he's always kept himself apart from. This forces him to reconnect with his old university roommate and disabled community activist Toby and his outspoken social media influencer girlfriend, Sonja. As a result, Noah has to reconcile his own feelings and prejudices to other disabled people and face up to himself in a Faustian dramedy of social mores. This is the first feature co-written by 2019 Developing the Developer recipient and writer/director Jack Dowdell and writer/performer Dean Nash. Both are advocates for representation and authentic casting of disabled people in screen media. Michael Wrenn ([6 Festivals](#), [Three Summers](#)) is producing.
- **Owner's Manual: Operation & Maintenance of the Human Body:** This feature-length comedic family adventure is about Gabby, a grade one girl with anxiety who thinks she's broken every time she sweats or jitters. But when she is sucked into her own body and discovers that her organs are a series of mismanaged, mid-construction Power Plants which generate each of her symptoms, Gabby teams up with the lazy site-manager Wozza and uptight safety-supervisor Janet, to quick-fix her Power Plants so she can finally be complete and 'normal', but learns to accept that every body is a work-in-progress. This is the first feature film by writer/director Bradley Slabe, whose AACTA and AWGIE award-winning short film [Lost & Found](#) has over seven million views online.
- **Kick It:** A six-part online series about Cameron, whose attempt to nab the local women's AFL championship is threatened when new recruit Angie takes the team by storm. When Angie and Cameron's sweaty tension continues off the field, Cameron must decide if she wants to play with her head or her heart, and learns that sometimes, found family is just as important as the one you're born into. From the creative team behind hit TikTok series [The Formal](#) - which has chalked up over eight million views online - is writer/director/producer Monique Terry, writer/producer Hannah-Rae Meegan and writer/director Abby Gallaway. Linus Gibson ([Sequin in a Blue Room](#)) is also producing, with Dana Bradshaw co-producing.
- **Deadbeat Ends Meet:** An animated online comedy that follows housemates Milo (a frill neck lizard) and Indy (a dingo) who throw themselves into thankless jobs in search of a quick buck to keep their lives afloat. The series follows the pair as they navigate their mid-twenties and the baggage that comes with trying to prop yourself up whilst working out exactly who you want to be and what you want to do with the rest of your life. *Deadbeat Ends Meet* is created by Evie Hilliar and written by Hilliar, Mike Greaney (YouTube series [The Future of Everything](#)), Nicolette Minster ([Girl at the Window](#)) and Holly Tosi ([Neighbours](#)). The series is produced by Nicholas Colla ([The Future of Everything](#), [Rebooted](#)).
- **The Ghan:** A comedy drama feature film from acclaimed stage and screen writer Joanna Murray-Smith ([Palm Beach](#)) about a group of travellers on the trip of a lifetime aboard the iconic train, The Ghan. A transcontinental odyssey across Australia becomes a journey of personal transformation for the passengers as they let go of their old identities and, through conflict and laughter, discover brave new versions of themselves more suited for the journey that lies ahead. Alongside Murray-Smith is writer Emma Jensen (*I Am Woman*), with Kristian Moliere ([The Babadook](#)) and Julie Byrne ([The Survival of Kindness](#)) producing. Jeremy Sims, writer/director/producer of [Last Cab to Darwin](#), is attached as director.
- **Gorgeous:** Set in Tasmania in 2017, this episodic drama/thriller centres around journalist Charlotte Barber who returns home to Launceston to make a podcast - juxtaposing the 2017 Marriage Equality vote with the unsolved murder of her girlfriend's mother 20 years earlier, when homosexuality was still criminalised. As she conducts her investigations, Charlotte's personal connection to the story becomes intertwined with her own need to confront the shame she's held around her sexuality. This

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series is written and produced by Alexandra Keddie and Gemma Bird Matheson, whose credits include [The Housemate](#) and [Me & Her\(pes\)](#). Attached as script consultant is Jane Allen whose credits include [100% Wolf: Legend of the Moonstone](#) and [Troppo](#), and the writers' room is rounded out by Jada Alberts as Story Consultant ([Cleverman](#)) and Kartanya Maynard.

- **One Hundred Days:** This psychological drama/thriller is based on the critically acclaimed novel by Alice Pung and centres around Chinese migrant, Ma. When her teenage daughter Alina falls pregnant, Ma imposes the Eastern practice of postpartum confinement to physically detain Alina - desperate to protect Alina and her grandchild. This story is about motherhood, autonomy, and the frightening singlemindedness of those desperate to protect their loved ones... at any cost. Adapting into a feature film is writer Michelle Law and director Corrie Chen ([New Gold Mountain](#)) - the creative team behind the first web series commissioned by SBS, [Homecoming Queens](#).
- **Summer of Evil:** From writer/producer Michael Hudson ([Ties That Bind](#)), this six-part action-adventure horror series sets the scene in the vast Australian bushland, where a creature has awoken from its centuries-old slumber and is hellbent on revenge. Discovering that the spooky Dreamtime stories they were told as kids aren't just stories, an unlikely gang of youths venture on a terrifying quest deep in the bush to save the adults of their small community from this supernatural threat that has enslaved them. Also attached as producers are Stephanie Westwood ([Shiny One](#), [Finding Jedda](#)) and Diya Eid ([All My Friends Are Leaving Brisbane](#)).

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

ABOUT STORY DEVELOPMENT FUNDING

Teams or individual applicants with projects for any platform including TV, film and online, can apply for development funding from two program strands - the Generate Fund and 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.

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