

Screen Australia and SBS bring Digital Originals initiative back in 2021

Monday 1 February 2021: Screen Australia and SBS are excited to announce the Digital Originals initiative is returning in 2021, with applications now open. Digital Originals is a joint initiative of Screen Australia and SBS, aimed at developing exciting and innovative drama projects to premiere on SBS On Demand and NITV, from screen creatives who are currently under-represented in the sector.

The initiative aims to support practitioners and projects that reflect gender equity and/or the diversity of people and experiences from around Australia. This includes those who identify as First Nations Australians; are from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds; those who are living with a disability; are female or trans/gender diverse; identify as LGBTQIA+; and those who are located in regional and remote areas.

Screen Australia Senior Online Investment Manager, **Lee Naimo** said, “We have been incredibly impressed with the online original projects we have funded over the years including critically acclaimed *Homecoming Queens* and *Robbie Hood* for SBS On Demand, and most recently *The Tailings* and *Iggy & Ace*. The web series format is a terrific way for emerging practitioners to explore and develop their creative voices, and this year we are expanding our initiative by supporting up to three projects to fruition with production funding. We hope the Digital Originals initiative will continue to find unique stories that add to the cultural landscape of Australian content and showcase our upcoming and underrepresented creatives to a national audience. We’re thrilled to once again partner with SBS on Digital Originals and unearth more distinctive and emerging voices.”

SBS Director of TV and Online Content, **Marshall Heald**, said: “We’re thrilled to be continuing this important partnership with Screen Australia which provides tangible opportunities and support for emerging creatives under-represented in our sector, to develop and share their unique stories. As we’ve seen from the success so far, stories which reflect and explore the diversity of Australia today in innovative, entertaining and compelling ways can really connect with audiences, and that’s something we’re deeply committed to and passionate about across the SBS network.

“It’s also a brilliant screen creative pathway as we’ve seen with Corrie Chen, who directed the short form series *Homecoming Queens*, went onto direct numerous TV shows and is currently directing SBS’s upcoming drama series, *New Gold Mountain*.”

This year, SBS will premiere two new Digital Originals projects - *Iggy & Ace*, a comedy exploring friendship, addiction and recovery through a queer lens, filming in Western Australia in early 2021, and *The Tailings*, a murder mystery set against one of the most fragile, beautiful landscapes in Australia, the west coast of Tasmania, and celebrates the tenacity and pride of regional communities rarely seen on screen.

SBS Director of Indigenous Content, **Tanya Denning-Orman**, added: “SBS, with NITV at its heart, is committed to the development of the incredible First Nations creative talent that exists around the country, and providing vital pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practitioners. This initiative is a great way to bring more Indigenous voices, telling their stories on their terms, to all Australians. We can’t wait to see a range of new projects and practitioners in 2021, and look forward to the journey ahead with them.”

Up to ten teams (which must include at least one writer) will be invited to attend an exclusive workshop in Sydney scheduled for 4 - 6 May, 2021 run by Screen Australia and SBS, and will also feature a range of guest presenters from the industry. Teams of either two or three members are eligible. The workshop will focus on short form narrative writing skills, as well as developing the projects to align with the SBS Charter and SBS platforms, culminating in a pitch to Screen Australia and SBS. Teams outside of Sydney will receive flights and accommodation for up to two team members to attend the workshop. The workshop may be held virtually pending travel restrictions in place at the time.

From these ten teams, up to four will be chosen to take their projects into further development, and from these up to three will be chosen for production funding and commissioning with Screen Australia and SBS. Submissions should include an up to three page pitch document outlining the details of the series and more



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information on the creative team; an up to three minute pitch video outlining the creators personal connection to and reason for wanting to develop the project; and an up to 10 page script sample of previous work. For more information on eligibility and application guidelines click [here](#).

Screen Australia's Senior Online Investment Manager Lee Naimo, SBS Development Executive Donna Chang and NITV's Head of Commissioning and Programming Kyas Hepworth will host a Q&A webinar on Wednesday 10 February, 2021 at 12pm AEDT for practitioners interested in applying for the initiative. The webinar will include a panel discussion with more information on the initiative and include a question and answer session for those interested in applying. Practitioners interested in applying are strongly encouraged to register to attend the webinar and registration is essential. Please register [here](#).

Submissions are open now and will close 5pm AEDT Thursday 11 March, 2021. Please ensure you read the guidelines [here](#) before contacting us at online@screenaustralia.gov.au with any remaining enquires.

ABOUT DIGITAL ORIGINALS

The Digital Originals initiative is an evolution of SBS's Short-Form Content Initiative, which aims to provide opportunities and support for writers from diverse backgrounds. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people living with a disability, women, those who identify as LGBTQIA+ and gender diverse, and people living in rural and remote areas.

In 2019, [10 teams were selected to develop their short form projects](#) through two workshops, with mentorship from Australian television director and producer, Anna Dokoza (*Flight Of The Conchords*, *Shrill*) and Ryan O'Connell, writer, producer and star of the Emmy-nominated Netflix short-form series, *Special*.

From this group, [three projects were selected to receive development funding](#) from Screen Australia and SBS. In November 2020, [Iggly & Ace](#) was announced as the first Digital Originals project to receive production funding.

There will be two Digital Original series premiering in 2021:

Iggly & Ace, a comedy exploring friendship, addiction and recovery through a queer lens. Filming in early 2021 in Western Australia:

Directors: Monica Zanetti & AB Morrison

Producer: Hannah Ngo

Writer: AB Morrison

Iggly & Ace is a Lazy Susan Films production for SBS. Principal production funding from Screen Australia in association with SBS. Developed with the assistance of Screenwest and Lotterywest.

The Tailings, a murder mystery set against one of the most fragile, beautiful landscapes in Australia, the west coast of Tasmania, and celebrates the tenacity and pride of regional communities rarely seen on screen:

Director: Stevie Cruz-Martin

Producer: Liz Doran

Writer: Caitlin Richardson

The Tailings is a Liz Doran Productions production for SBS, in association with 2 Jons and Roar Film. Principal production investment from Screen Australia in association with SBS. Financed with support from Screen Tasmania.

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