

## Screen Australia Funding Paper- Response

Paul Gallasch

*Disclaimer: I, like many of you am advocating for the type of funding that I am most likely to receive/have received. But just to clarify, I am also seeking this type of funding because I believe in it as a model, not just because I think I can get it.*

Surely we can agree that public financing in the arts has a mandate to fund culturally significant work. It has the advantage of not only being free from the narrow expectations of financial recoupment but also the obsession over the indicators that the private market demands. Screen Australia needs to lessen its immediate focus on the audience and instead trust filmmakers to provide that cultural relevancy themselves. I would advocate for a documentary residency program to be set up, where up to say 10 or 20 filmmakers (but not necessarily all of that number) receive a yearly stipend (valid for one or two years), plus in kind support (gear, office/edit space etc) with inclusion into the program based not on proposed projects but on perceived dedication to the craft, skill, interest in continued learning and potential cultural significance. Screen Australia would have to trust that work was made during this time, but would be unable to mandate it (all the more reason why the acceptance decision would need to be a good one). Obviously this program requires subjectivity, a small judging panel making decisions based on feeling, but I propose that we should not be afraid of giving the people most experienced and wise in our documentary community the power to influence the next generation in such a subjective manor. This movement we are in toward 'auditoriable' decision-making where no one is ultimately responsible because we have transferred our power to a set of pre-determined, crude, audience based criteria, helps neither our society nor the filmmaking community.

This set of resident filmmakers each year would then compete (with everyone else) for the additional SA funding for completion of individual projects, but more importantly would be placed in a powerful position to approach international funding bodies/distributors and philanthropic supporters due to the weight of the Screen Australia brand behind them.

Essentially my argument boils down to a philosophic one. Do we want to encourage and sustain the most creative, inspired and dedicated filmmakers? Or do we want to encourage our community to prioritize large audience attachments; immediately accessible work that often competes directly with private capital and results in a lowest common denominator slate destined to be forgotten in a year or two?

We should take a lesson from the fine arts (or though they too are losing their grip) and keep public funding dedicated to making the films that by definition the market can't. If its not risky, we're doing it wrong.

*\*Yes, I am a fan of the signature fund and believe it goes a long way to living up to the above expectations, and so would at least advocate for the continuing of that program. But ideally the signature fund would be joined by a residency program, providing financial security to a range of filmmakers but also the possibility of funding one-off projects that come from outside the current class of Screen Australia Documentary Residents.*