

Screen Australia announces \$4 million of production funding for 13 documentaries

Wednesday 17 August 2022: The Australian Open tennis tournament, Australia's LGBTQI+ history and the humble platypus are set to be explored in the latest Australian documentaries sharing in \$4 million of production funding from Screen Australia. The agency has announced funding for seven projects through the Commissioned Program, five through the Producer Program and one funded through the First Nations Department.

Screen Australia's Head of Documentary, **Alex West** said, "We are living through a period of immense change to the planet and society. So these documentaries offer timely reflections on Australian culture and identity, exploring the importance of topics such as activism, arts, health and the environment. Documentary provides a powerful avenue to spark or shift national conversations, and we can't wait to see these fantastic projects brought to life on screen."

Screen Australia's Head of First Nations, **Angela Bates** said, "We are pleased to support *Still We Rise* which will provide an Indigenous lens to the events surrounding the Aboriginal Tent Embassy to align with its 50th anniversary, with incredible archival footage from the ABC. This project will be vital viewing, not only as a celebration of First Nations history and activism, but also as an invaluable resource to educate future generations."

The project funded through the First Nations Department is:

- ***Still We Rise*:** A one-hour archival documentary for the ABC that will capture the year of 1972, when activists erected an Aboriginal Tent Embassy on the lawns opposite Parliament House. Fifty years on, this program takes a bold dive into a year of protest and revolutionary change for First Nations people. Writer/director John Harvey ([Off Country](#)) has teamed up with producer Anna Grieve ([Looky Looky Here Comes Cooky](#)). *Still We Rise* is a Tamarind Tree Pictures production financed in association with VicScreen and developed and produced in association with the ABC.

The projects funded through the Producer Program are:

- ***Australia's Open*:** A feature documentary which will chart the highs and lows of our nation alongside our most celebrated individual tennis tournament, the Australian Open. Examining the events that have shaken and shaped it both on and off the court, this film will explore how the evolution of the event has mirrored Australia's own journey as a nation, from poor colonial cousin to a mature and confident world player. *Australia's Open* will be directed by Ili Baré ([The Leadership](#)) and produced by Charlotte Wheaton and Nick Batzias of GoodThing Productions, whose credits include [The Australian Dream](#). This project is financed with support from the ABC, VicScreen and the Melbourne International Film Festival Premiere Fund.
- ***The Endangered Generation?*:** A feature documentary narrated by acclaimed actress Laura Dern, which challenges the myth that the world is fundamentally driven by selfishness and competition and instead explores how kindness and cooperation may be just as crucial to prospering in the natural world. As humans face the next crises - whether pandemic, environmental collapse or social disorder - this film will shine a light on new models for thinking and living. The creative team features writer/director Celeste Geer ([Then the Wind Changed](#)), producers Gal Greenspan ([Fighting for Hakeem](#)) and Daniel Joyce ([Martha: A Picture Story](#)), and executive producer Leila Connors ([Ice on Fire](#)). *The Endangered Generation?* is financed with support from VicScreen, the Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) Premiere Fund and the South Australian Film Corporation. It will debut at MIFF this month.
- ***Las Balsas: An Ocean Odyssey*:** A feature documentary about the world's longest recorded raft journey, the 1973 Las Balsas Expedition which saw 12 men travel 9,000 miles at sea on three rafts. With no motors, GPS or back-up, their aim was to cross the Pacific, from Ecuador to Australia. The crew's original 16mm film reels have been unearthed and will be meticulously re-mastered and



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intercut with interviews with the surviving raftsmen, recounting the sharks, storms, psychological struggles and starvation they overcame to achieve this legendary ocean voyage. This film is written and directed by Alex Barry ([Waltzing the Dragon with Benjamin Law](#)), produced by Chadden Hunter ([Planet Earth II](#), [Seven Worlds One Planet](#)) and executive produced by Bettina Dalton ([Playing with Sharks](#)) of WildBear Entertainment, along with Anna Godas and Oli Harbottle of Dogwoof.

- **Left Write Hook:** A feature documentary about a ground-breaking recovery program that helps survivors of childhood sexual abuse find transformation and friendship, through a combination of boxing and creative writing. With intimate and privileged access to this unique program, *Left Write Hook* is a story about resilience, connection, expression and healing. The creative team features writer/director Shannon Owen ([When the Sky Fell Down - The Myth of Guy Bourdin](#)), producer Donna Lyon ([Disclosure](#)), with producer Alice Burgin and executive producer Gal Greenspan whose credits include [Moja Vesna](#) and the upcoming [Fighting for Hakeem](#). This film is financed with support from VicScreen and the University of Melbourne.
- **Speedway:** A true-crime documentary about the unsolved ‘Burger Chef Murders’ that claimed the lives of four teenagers in Speedway, Indiana in 1978. This film uses archive, animation, interviews and scripted scenes to explore the 40-year mystery. The creative team features writer/directors Luke Rynderman and Adam Kamien ([Spirited Away: The Case of Malka Leifer](#)), and producers Bonnie McBride ([Demoniac](#)), Anna Vincent ([I Am Mother](#)), Louise Nathanson ([Chasing Wonders](#)) and Lisa Scott ([The Tourist](#)). This project is financed with support from the South Australian Film Corporation.

The projects funded through the Commissioned Program are:

- **Australia’s Sleep Revolution with Dr Michael Mosley:** A three-part series from Artemis Media for SBS that sees serial insomniac Dr Michael Mosley together with some of the nation’s poorest sleepers, put their bodies on the line to trial Australian-led, world first sleep treatments. Teaming up with expert physicians, Dr Michael Mosley will wake up the nation to the dangers of bad slumber and inspire a sleep revolution. The creative team includes series producer Katherine Barrett, alongside series director Russell Vines, development producer Nia Pericles and executive producer Celia Tait who previously collaborated on [Australia’s Health Revolution with Dr Michael Mosley](#). This series is financed with support from Screenwest and Lotterywest and the South Australian Film Corporation.
- **Out of the City (working title):** A three-part series for SBS from Blackfella Films, the producers of [Filthy Rich and Homeless](#) and [First Contact](#). This documentary from writer/producer Jacob Hickey and producer Darren Dale, will explore multiculturalism and life in regional areas. This series is financed with support from VicScreen.
- **Queerstralia:** A three-part series for ABC that sees comedian Zoë Coombs Marr engage with the untold and fascinating queer (LGBTQI+) history of Australia - a place of gay Diggers, lesbian convict gangs, trans pioneers and cross-dressing bushrangers. *Queerstralia* will be directed by Stamatia Maroupas ([Ms Represented](#)), written by Zoë Coombs Marr and Nayuka Gorrie ([The Heights](#)), and executive produced by Jon Casimir ([You Can’t Ask That](#)). It is financed with support from VicScreen and the Judith Nielsen Institute.
- **Revealed: Reefshot:** A feature documentary for Stan’s Revealed slate about the Great Barrier Reef and some of its most loyal citizens who are racing against time to turn the tide on the danger facing the world’s largest living organism. Led by Andy Ridley, the creator of Earth Hour, a small group of scientists, volunteers and Indigenous rangers set out to help protect and conserve the Reef by uploading data to one of the largest natural census undertaken in human history. Rather than getting a sinking feeling about the Reef and its fate, seeing this armada in action aims to inspire and empower viewers to take part in their plight. This film from CME and WildBear Entertainment is directed by Matt Tomaszewski ([Outback Wrangler](#)) and produced by Chris Chard and Holly Trueman ([Human Animal](#)). It is executive produced by Michael Tear ([Hating Peter Tatchell](#)), Bettina Dalton

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([Playing with Sharks](#)) and Tom Abood and is financed with support from Citizens of the Great Barrier Reef and Screen Queensland. It will premiere as a Stan Original.

- **The Black Hand:** A three-part series for ABC that explores an Australian Italian community's struggle against hard times, extreme politics and the mafia in their midst. Director Kriv Stenders ([Slim & I](#)) teams up with writer/producer Adam Grossetti, writer Anya Beyersdorf ([Fires](#)), line producer Therese Duranti and producer Kate Pappas ([Canopy: Love Letters to Our Trees](#)). The executive producers are Michael Tear ([Hating Peter Tatchell](#)), Alan Erson ([Playing with Sharks](#)) and Anthony LaPaglia. This documentary is financed with support from the ABC.
- **The First Inventors:** A four-part series for NITV and Network 10 hosted by actor Rob Collins ([Total Control](#)) who investigates the innovations, complex knowledge systems and scientific discoveries of Australia's First People, to reveal how the world's oldest living culture has thrived in Australia for at least 50,000 years. Together with First Nations' experts and scientists, Collins examines ancient ingenuity and archaeological discoveries to bring scientific inventions of Australia's First Nations people to the foreground. This documentary series is directed by award-winning filmmaker Larissa Behrendt ([Maralinga Tjarutka](#)) alongside co-producer Cian McCue, with Ben Davies ([Outback Ringer](#)) and Ben Commens ([Further Back in Time for Dinner](#)) executive producing. This project is produced by Ronde Media with Moogie Down Productions co-producing, and is financed with support from the National Indigenous Australians Agency, with Tourism Australia and Screen Territory.
- **The Platypus Guardian:** A one-hour documentary from WildBear Entertainment and Tetrapod Films for the ABC and The WNET Group exploring the secret world of Hobart's platypus through the eyes of local naturalist Peter Walsh. In the urban heart of the city Pete discovers a hidden community of these mysterious aquatic mammals. Pete forms a unique and intimate bond with one special platypus he calls Zoom who he finds tangled in plastic. Changed by the experience Pete galvanises the community to save Hobart's last wild platypus. This documentary is directed by Nick Hayward ([Quoll Farm](#)), produced by Hayward and Fraser Johnston ([Tartarus](#)) and executive produced by Chadden Hunter ([Planet Earth 2](#) & [Seven Worlds One Planet](#)) and Bettina Dalton ([Playing with Sharks](#)). It is financed with support from Screen Tasmania.

The full list of project blocklines is available [here for Documentary](#) and here [for First Nations](#). The latest projects funded for documentary development are available [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 [Curious Australia with SBS](#), [the joint initiative with The Guardian](#), and [Witness with Al Jazeera](#).

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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