Response to
Program Guidelines

14th November 2008

by the
Australian Cinematographers Society
Australian Guild of Screen Composers
Australian Screen Editors
Australian Screen Sound Guild
(hereinafter called "the Guilds")

The Guilds that have compiled this response are peak Australian industry bodies representing over 2500 industry professionals.

INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

Further to our submission of 30th September, we re-iterate our support for the development of a diverse and sustainable film & television industry and creative sector.

A FRESH VISION

It is difficult to respond to, or to assess the majority of Screen Australia's funding proposals in the absence of many key pieces of information, not least the overall, or at least relative, budgets for its key components. Especially since it is clear that most, if not all points made in our previous submission have not been considered or adopted, we are confining this response to a few broader comments.

We again support the focus on the development of sustainable businesses. But we feel that, in its haste to meet deadlines, Screen Australia is missing out on a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for more fundamental change and for a fresh vision for our industry.

INDUSTRY CONSULTATION

We are concerned at the speed with which major changes to our industry are being proposed, if not implemented, and that this is occurring without the genuine consultation suggested, if not required, by the Minister's statements.

PRESCRIPTIVENESS

We note that, in many areas, a less prescriptive approach has been adopted, and we wholeheartedly support this. However, in many areas, it appears that Screen Australia is racing to create formulae or prescriptions for funding without first considering broader principles raised by industry that would better inform such decisions.

In general, we encourage further flexibility and less prescriptiveness.

STATE/TERRITORY COLLABORATION

We support strong collaboration between Screen Australia and its State and Territory counterparts. However, we believe that industry practitioners and their representative bodies are generally better qualified to provide advice to Screen Australia about what are the needs of different regions of the country.

Just as part of the philosophy of the Producer Offset is to pass on greater responsibility and funding directly to film-makers, and to eliminate some bureaucracy, we believe that Screen Australia should regard industry associations as its key partners and as providing its key networks throughout the country.

DOCUMENTARIES

We support and encourage the production of a diverse range of documentaries. We re-iterate our support for a broader definition of "national interest" than has been applied in the past. Films and television programs are important to our environment, for instance, (not to mention education, tourism or health) as well as to "Australian culture".

We believe that documentary funding levels should not be arbitrarily capped, but should be budget related.

PRESALES

We do not believe that pre-sales should be a necessary requirement of support, especially given the changing nature of the marketplace.

If we are to foster as diverse a range of productions as possible, we must allow for great diversity in funding models. Requirements for presales do not always allow for this.

ENTERPRISE FUNDING

We support the new emphasis on enterprise funding and, in particular, the assurance that Screen Australia will not creatively assess projects under this scheme.

It is difficult to make further comment until the terms and intended recoupment positions of the parties become clear.

WORKSHOPS

We question whether or not Screen Australia should be responsible for running workshops. We believe, in general, that this is one of the roles of industry practitioners and of industry associations and we would encourage Screen Australia to pass on responsibility and funding for workshops to the appropriate industry bodies.

PRODUCTION FUNDING

We support the less prescriptive and more flexible approach to production funding and, in particular, to the timing of funding submissions. We await the opportunity of further consultation as to how assessment panels will be constituted and will operate.

It is essential that any creative assessment of projects be carried out by industry professionals with the same or greater experience in the same genre as the project under assessment.

SHORT FILMS

Short films have played a special role in the development of the Australian film/TV industry and of some its leading creative talents. We do not have confidence that State

and Territory agencies will all be able, or will have the funds, to take on responsibility for this and to coordinate this with broader training opportunities.

We do not believe that the training and development of individual practitioners is as separate from industry development as the intended division of responsibilities between Screen Australia, AFTRS and the State/Territory agencies suggests.

A more coordinated, whole-of-government approach to our industry is required.

INDIGENOUS FUNDING

We support the strong participation of indigenous film-makers in our industry.

We believe that the best opportunities for sustainable employment for indigenous Australians will be created through a focus on the development of sustainable businesses, whether indigenous or not, in some instances in association with incentives for the employment of indigenous film-makers across the broader industry.

Since many indigenous filmmakers, or potential filmmakers, are based in regional Australia, it is essential that a greater emphasis be placed on the development of sustainable businesses, of all types, in regional Australia.

EQUAL ACCESS

We believe it to be of fundamental importance that any funding or schemes set up by Screen Australia be equally accessible to all Australians. To date, we see no mechanism or funding in place to correct the past imbalances that have contributed to an unnecessarily centralised film/TV industry in Australia.

Background

Australian Cinematographers Society

The ACS is Australia's peak organisation for cinematographers, with over 1200 members and an active branch in every State and Territory. Founded 50 years ago, it looks after the interests of cinematographers, recognizing excellence through its awards and internationally-recognised accreditation, conducting workshops, training and screenings throughout the country, keeping members informed about the industry and changing technology through a quarterly magazine and regular newsletters, and providing professional and social networking opportunities.

Australian Guild of Screen Composers

The AGSC represents the interests of Australian screen composers in television, film and multi-media through developing and promoting employment opportunities, undertaking educational initiatives and increasing their profile amongst the industry.

Australian Screen Editors Guild

The ASE is a cultural, professional and educational organisation, dedicated to the pursuit and recognition of excellence in the arts, sciences and technology of motion picture film and televisual post production. The Guild aims to promote, improve and protect the role of editor as an essential and significant contributor to all screen productions.

ASE was formed in 1996 and has nearly 300 members in all states, although most members are in NSW and Victoria. The Guild is an association of professional screen editors and assistants working in a wide range of disciplines.

Australian Screen Sound Guild

The Australian Screen Sound Guild represents the profession of screen sound in film, television, multimedia and other related audio industries within Australia. It aims to recognise, maintain and promote original and creative work, to encourage high standards and to facilitate study and research into the knowledge, techniques and technology of screen sound production.

Through its equal membership of AFFTA (The Australian Federation of Film and Television Associations) it is also able to represent its members at Government level.