

Screen Australia announces Narrative Content funding for 91 projects, including four short films paired with industry mentors

1 April 2026: Screen Australia has today announced \$20.4 million of production and development funding across 91 narrative projects, including the first projects through its new Short Film Production Funding Program.

Among the titles is a new season of the award-winning children's series *Little J & Big Cuz*, an untitled Official Australian/Canadian Co-production feature film marking Cody Fern's directorial debut, animated mystery musical direct-to-audience series *The Art of Murder* for YouTube, and family film *Silver Beach* (working title).

Sundowner, *The Novelty*, *Inferno* and *Lazy Love (Lasagne 365)* are the first short films to receive production funding through the new program, marking the agency's return to direct investment in the format and reaffirming its vital role in the careers of future feature filmmakers. Alongside this support, participating teams will receive professional mentorship from an exceptional cohort of industry directors whose insight will help strengthen skills, elevate projects and support pathways to extended narrative production. Mentors include Beck Cole ([High Country](#), [Deadloch](#)), Isobel Knowles and Van Sowerwine ([The World Came Flooding In](#), [Passenger](#)), Noora Niasari ([Shayda](#)) and Goran Stolevski ([Of An Age](#)).

Screen Australia Director of Narrative Content Louise Gough said, "The range of these 91 projects showcases the depth, diversity and bold creativity of local storytellers, shaped with Australia's unique blend of humour, style and perspective. We're particularly lucky to have industry figures of such calibre to mentor the four directors of our Short Film Program, guiding them to hone their unique, imaginative shorts for cinema and festival audiences. No doubt this experience will help the short film teams to grow their craft, build recognition and eventually move toward long-form storytelling."

Some of the supported projects include:

- ***The Laugh of Lakshmi*:** A debut feature film about a mother and a son separated by a civil war from acclaimed theatre writer/director S. Shakthidharan (*Counting and Cracking*, *The Jungle and The Sea*). Written and directed by Shakthi and produced by award-winning producers John Maynard ([Balibo](#)), Vivek Rangachari (*The Lunchbox*) and executive producer Bridget Ikin ([Sherpa](#), [Look Both Ways](#)). *The Laugh of Lakshmi* is filmed in Northern Sri Lanka and Western Sydney in Tamil and English. Major production investment from Screen Australia, in association with the Felix Foundation and Palmera. Financed with support from Screen NSW. Local distribution by Footprint Films and international sales by Maze Film Sales.
- **Untitled Feature Film:** An Official Australian/Canadian Co-production and the feature directorial debut from actor Cody Fern starring Naomi Watts, Sarah Paulson, Odessa A'zion, Dianne Wiest, and Toby Wallace. The film centres on a celebrated actress whose life begins to unravel on the eve of her greatest performance. Produced by Matilda Comers and Will Howarth for Fictious, alongside Nancy Grant (*Mommy*, *Sentimental Value*) and Rosalie Chicoine Perreault (*Geographies of Solitude*), the film has received major production investment from Telefilm Canada and Screen Australia. Distributed by Icon in Australia and Elevation Pictures in Canada. International sales by mk2.
- ***Fortitude Valley*:** Written, created and executive produced by Moving Floor Entertainment co-founders Stephen M Irwin and Leigh McGrath ([Harrow](#)), with Hunter Page-Lochard ([Reckless](#), [Beep and Mort](#)), this gripping six-part crime thriller stars Page-Lochard and acclaimed actress Kat Stewart. Filmed and set in Queensland's capital city, the series explores family secrets, the corrupting force of power and the complicated truths behind lies. *Fortitude Valley* is directed by Sian Davies ([Black Snow](#)),

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produced by Andrew Walker ([Deadloch](#)) and co-produced by Ross Allsop ([The Artful Dodger](#)), with executive producer Greg Sitch ([Fisk](#)). Major production investment from Screen Australia, the ABC and Screen Queensland. International sales by DCD Rights.

- **Little J & Big Cuz Series 5:** The award-winning animated children's series for NITV and the ABC returns for a fifth season. From director and Trawlwoolway man Tony Thorne, the series follows five-year-old Little J and nine-year-old Big Cuz, two First Nations Australian kids who, with the help of Nanna and their teacher Ms Chen, find out all about culture, community and Country. Co-produced by Ned Lander Media and First Nations company Ramu Productions, the series has received major production investment from Screen Australia and the ABC, in association with NITV. Financed with support from the Australian Children's Television Foundation with VicScreen, Screen Tasmania and the Australian Council for Educational Research. International sales by the Australian Children's Television Foundation.
- **Agata the Writer:** A debut feature from Polish-born Australian writer/director/video artist Kuba Dorabialski and produced by Alex White ([Babyteeth](#)). Mia Wasikowska stars as a Polish-Australian satirical novelist who travels from Sydney to Sarajevo to write a war novel. Challenged by locals who question her motives, her creative uncertainty grows while a startling mystery unfolds. Executive produced by Erik Black, Mia Wasikowski and Alémais, *Agata the Writer* has received principal production funding from Screen Australia. Financed with support from Creative Australia and the Adelaide Film Festival Investment Fund. Local distribution by Bonsai Films.
- **The Art of Murder:** An animated series to be released on YouTube from Choc Chip Animation Studios. Spearheaded by sisters Nirali Somaia (writer/director) and Anokhi Somaia (writer/producer), this murder mystery musical is a love letter to pop culture and the artist's journey, set in a world where sketchbook drawings come to life. Featuring voice actors Joey Bizinger (*The Anime Man*), Joey Richter and Lauren Lopez (*Team Starkid*), Megan Lee (*KPop Demon Hunters*) and Lizzie Freeman (*The Amazing Digital Circus*), with composers Sonya Belousova and Giona Ostinelli (*One Piece*, *The Witcher*). Principal production funding from Screen Australia, in association with Choc Chip Animation Studios and VicScreen.
- **Silver Beach (working title):** From multi-award-winning producer and executive producer Joanna Werner ([Goolagong](#), [Knee High Spies](#)) and executive producer and creator Rachel Davis ([Mustangs FC](#), [Turn Up The Volume](#)), with AWGIE award-winning screenwriter Alix Beane ([The Strange Chores](#), [Rock Island Mysteries](#)), *Silver Beach* is a family film about friendship, self-acceptance and the courage to pursue your dreams. Major production investment from Screen Australia, in association with the Australian Children's Television Foundation and Stan. Financed with support from Screen Queensland with VicScreen. International sales by the Australian Children's Television Foundation.
- **The Funeral Singer:** A six-part romantic comedy series from Jungle Entertainment that navigates grief, fear and falling in love in the most unlikely of places. Created by Lucy Durack ([Love in Lockdown](#)) and written by Leon Ford ([Upright](#), [Dog Park](#)), with executive producers Jason Burrows and Chloe Rickard for Jungle Entertainment. *The Funeral Singer* received development funding.
- **Asian Girls:** A horror film which expands on the successful short of the same name, this feature is from writer/director Hyun Lee ([Fake](#)), with producers Georgia Noe and Matt Noonan (*Hunt for the Wilderpeople*). A driven Korean-Australian woman plagued by relentless visions of ghosts, Kim receives a stark warning from a Korean shaman that she must give up her career aspirations to become a shaman herself. *Asian Girls* received development funding.

The Narrative Content Short Film supported projects are:

- **Sundowner:** From Western Australian First Nations filmmakers, this romantic comedy is produced by Shakara Walley ([Aussie Rangers](#)) directed by Gary Hamaguchi ([Doug the Human](#), [The Lost Crystals of](#)

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[Jessica's Room](#)) and co-written by Calen Tassone ([The Heights](#), [Irreverent](#)) and Jamahl Ryder. The film is based in a First Nations cultural awareness training organisation where office worker Stephen must decide to follow either his head or his heart. The *Sundowner* team will be mentored by director Beck Cole ([High Country](#), [Deadloch](#)). Principal production funding from Screen Australia.

- **The Novelty:** Driven by a female-led creative team including writer, director and producer Charlotte Mungomery (*This is Not Here*), with producers Rebecca Lamond ([The Golden Spurtle](#)) and Clementine Anderson (*Mary*), the short film is set in the rural town of Dalby, Queensland. In the heat of a summer's eve outside a hairdressing salon, innocence curdles with cruelty as a young girl's silence breaks with an irreversible act. The creative team for *The Novelty* will be mentored by director Noora Niasari. Principal production funding from Screen Australia in association with Screen Queensland.
- **Inferno:** A haunting coming-of-age story directed and written by Mark Wills ([The Horn](#), [Blood Orange](#)), produced and written by Rahel Romahn ([The Horn](#), [Blood Orange](#)), with producer Yolandi Franken ([Streets of Colour](#), [The Horn](#), [Carmen & Bolude](#)). When a group of teenagers plot a cruel prank on an alienated boy, they unwittingly awaken a quiet force within him. The *Inferno* team will be mentored by director and screenwriter Goran Stolevski. Principal production funding from Screen Australia.
- **Lazy Love (Lasagne 365):** An adult animation from animation duo Haein Kim (director) and Paul Rhodes (writer, director), and produced by writer, director and producer Robertino Zambrano ([Love in the Time of March Madness](#)) who is executive producing with Dulce Aguilar. The short film follows Apple, out to avenge an insult against so-called 'stinky Asian food,' and Toby, whose mission is to track down the best lasagne in Western Sydney. The *Lazy Love* team will be mentored by directors, screenwriters and animators Isobel Knowles and Van Sowerwine. Principal production funding from Screen Australia.

Screen Australia also funded recently announced series *The Airport Chaplain* and *Separated at Birth*, with support for further major Narrative Content projects to be announced in coming months.

The full list of Narrative Content blocklines is available [here](#).

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For accompanying image assets, click [here](#).

About Screen Australia

Screen Australia is the Australian Federal Government agency charged with supporting the development, production and promotion of Australian narrative, documentary and children's content, across television, feature films, online and games. Screen Australia also administers Australia's Official Co-production program, in addition to the Producer Offset incentive. The agency provides a broad range of resources and opportunities to the industry including access to research, market intelligence and special initiatives. For more information visit www.screenaustralia.gov.au.