

Submission to Screen Australia Documentary Revision 2019

Name: Ruth Cullen on behalf of AID group

Job Title: Producer, Director, Writer

Company: AID - we are a group of diverse, independent documentary makers

IMDB/Screen Guide Link:

File Attached:

What feedback, if any, do you have regarding the proposed changes to the Development Program?

We applaud the increase in development funds and agree that the 3 new categories are reflective of industry trends. We also support the requirements that 20% of the General Development Allocation will be intended for projects under \$500,000 and that 10% of the General Development allocation will be intended for the development of original (Australian IP owned) formats.

However, we suggest an increase in the cap for the Advanced Development category from \$20,000 to \$30,000. This will support producers whose projects have advanced market interest and may require time critical shooting during the finance stage.

We also note that as there are no rounds we are concerned about cashflow throughout the entire year.

What feedback, if any, do you have regarding the proposed changes to the Producer Program?

We are delighted that the amount allocated to this program has increased and we support the new cap of \$500,000. We also support the enhanced support for lower budget documentaries as outlined by Screen Australia. However, we are concerned at the lack of parity between the Producer Program and the Commissioned Program given the enormous demands on this fund.

As a consequence we recommend the following:

- re: "At least 20% of the Producer Funds will be targeted to projects that secure at least 10% of their budgets from international sources" P8

We recommend that all projects that meet these conditions be assessed via the Commissioned Program rather than the Producer Program

- re: "Asks over 500,000 will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances" (p8)

We recommend that any documentary project with a budget above \$1 million that requests Screen Australia funding above \$500,000 should be eligible to apply for the same fund as feature dramas and that this fund should also be open to hybrids and animation. We anticipate that this will be only a small number of projects and it will be an exception

What feedback, if any, do you have regarding the proposed changes to the Commissioned Program?

We support the lowering of the cap from 1 million to \$750,000, the removal of quotas, and the opening up of platforms as indicated in the discussion paper.

As financing, producing and distribution pathways become more complex, existing models of 'commissioning' practice become more varied and emergent. Commissioning today represents a broader practice than in the past. It can no longer be simply confined to traditional models. Screen Australia policy should reflect this by acknowledging a more inclusive and flexible concept of commissioning (or change the nomenclature and call it market strand).

We would like to recommend the following:

It makes sense in the emerging structures of financing 'presales' and distribution practice to include in the Commissioning Program projects that come to Screen Australia with 10% or more of their finance from overseas presales or guarantees. We recommend that any project that meets these conditions be moved from the Producer Fund to the Commissioned Program.

That a minimum of 20% of the Broadcast Fund be allocated to one-off documentaries (single hours and features). This will support a diversity of story telling styles and makers.

A minimum of 50% of funded formats must be Australian owned (ie the IP Australian owned). We encourage this investment of tax payers' money in our sector's future.

What feedback, if any, do you have regarding the introduction of the Completion Fund?

We strongly support this new fund as outlined. However, we note that applicants who have already received funding from the Producer Program and who were relying on PEP to complete their projects will have a serious budget shortfall as a consequence. We recommend that projects with budgets under 500K which have already received funding through the Producer Fund should still be able to apply to the Completion Fund where their creative merit will be assessed.

Do you have any further feedback?

Overall AID is very positive about the discussion paper and think many of the changes are very productive and congruent with the constantly evolving production world.

In response to the specific issues that were raised in this paper about our last group submission our comments are below:

RE: Having a documentary maker on the Screen Australia board.

We would like clarity around the process of selection for the board.

RE: cinema on demand being reviewed on a case to case basis for the offset.

We understand what Screen Australia is dealing with, but urge for more clarity on this matter. For example, in the rare case that a legitimate cash investment and distribution plan matches the traditional DG from a distributor then it ought to meet the requirements.

We also would like Screen Australia to consider the following:

Including impact and online/new media marketing strategies as a budget item / discrete fund. Many projects today begin this stage at development and we would like this included as an item from the development budget onwards. This would be especially beneficial as it gets people thinking about pathways to audience right from the beginning.

We would also like to add that our group consists of emerging and older documentary makers and we are very keen to support multi- generational crews and leadership teams. As ageism is still alive and well we would like this to be considered when looking at the diversity of the funding applicants