

Screen Australia announces over \$810,000 in development funding for 29 projects

Wednesday 28 February 2024: Screen Australia has announced 23 feature films and six television dramas that will share in over \$810,000 of story development funding.

Among the funded projects is *Willy*, the latest animation series from Ludo Studio, the production company behind world-wide phenomenon [Bluey](#); family feature film *The Last Tiger* about the remarkable friendship between 12-year-old girl Pippa and an injured thylacine pup; and horror/comedy feature *The Black Talons* written by Maria Lewis and directed by Shari Sebbens, the star of Jon Bell's upcoming psychological horror, [The Moogai](#), which [recently had its world premiere at the 2024 Sundance Film Festival](#).

Included in this slate are 19 projects that have been supported through the Generate Fund and 10 through the Premium Fund.

Screen Australia Head of Development **Bobby Romia** said, "We're absolutely thrilled to be supporting such a diverse array of TV drama and feature film projects in this latest development slate. All of these projects are driven by teams deeply connected to the content they're creating, opening up new avenues for creative expression whilst championing new voices to tell their unique stories. Screen Australia will be following each of their development journeys closely."

The projects funded for development include:

- **Desert Fish:** A comedy/drama feature film following Aboriginal man Alfie Munns, a lost soul burdened by a turbulent past, who seeks salvation in the remote Kimberley when he stumbles upon the visionary Frances Nerrima, a respected Elder determined to empower her people by building homes together. As they face setbacks, legal troubles, and bitter adversaries, Alfie must confront his demons and embrace his roots to bring hope, unity and a sense of purpose to a community. Attached is director Wayne Blair ([The Sapphires](#), [Top End Wedding](#)), writer/producers Victor Hunter and Melanie Hogan ([Kanyini](#)), producer Lisa Scott ([The Tourist](#)), script editor Keith Thompson ([The Sapphires](#)) and script editor/executive producer Mark Coles Smith ([Mystery Road: Origin](#)).
- **Going Troppo:** On the run from authorities, Bernadette, a tax avoidance accountant, escapes to her estranged and apparently wealthy father in tropical Darwin, in this eight-part comedy/drama series. Along the way she discovers that her father is actually a destitute tempestuous drag queen - unimpressed by her sudden arrival, emotionally immature, and who is as good a liar as herself. In an effort to reinvent herself and find a common ground with her infuriating father, she embarks on a turbulent mission to win his admiration and turn his bankrupt gay bar into a spectacular success. *Going Troppo* is from writer/producer Kate Wyvill ([The Wardrobe](#)), script consultant Katherine Thomson ([A Place to Call Home](#)) and story consultant Kamahi D'Jordon King (*Koori Gras* - Sydney World Pride, 2023), with Nadine Lee attached as a First Nations consultant.
- **Sophie Next Door:** An ever-deepening mystery wrapped in a high concept, science-fiction premise, *Sophie Next Door* is a feature film that explores time and self through a cyclical, fatalist lens. When 36-year-old Amelia finds herself living next door to her 12-year-old self, she takes on the persona of a mysterious stranger from her childhood in order to change the past. But as past and present collide in real-time via a series of devastating self-fulfilling prophecies, Amelia is faced with a choice – give into her seemingly inescapable fate, or fight to survive it. The film will be written, directed and produced by Clare Sladden (*NCIS: Sydney*, [Eden](#)), with Danielle Redford ([My Body Says](#), *Winding Road* Podcast) also producing.
- **The Black Talons:** A feature-length horror/comedy following a teen-girls netball team, The Black Talons, who defy the odds against mostly all-white competitors with more money and more resources. Just as their main rivals cheat them out of a Grand Final win, a flash flood hits - leaving them to take shelter in a Captain Cook-themed public housing tower. Forced to fight for their lives in a Colonial haunted house of horrors against reptilian monsters, The Black Talons have to work



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together if they're going to survive the night. *The Black Talons* will be directed by Shari Sebbens ([The Moth Effect](#), [The Moogai](#)) and written by Maria Lewis (*The House That Hungers*, *The Phantom Never Dies*).

- **The Golden Ass:** A six-part family drama/comedy about a mixed-Cypriot family descending into chaos when its patriarch, Mazhar, has a spectacular meltdown in the fruit and vegetable section of the local supermarket. The resulting notoriety lures his adult children home but, instead of dealing with the mess, they are drawn into a desperate plan: to create a viral cooking show with Mazhar and his delinquent pet donkey as the stars. Their goal is to reach 1 million followers, if death and dysfunction don't stand in their way. *The Golden Ass* will be written by Lâle Teoman (*The Palace That I Live In*) and produced by Rosemary Blight ([Black Snow](#)) and Kylie du Fresne ([Five Blind Dates](#)), with Polly Rowe attached as development producer.
- **The Last Tiger:** Set in the breathtaking wilds of Tasmania, this family feature film tells the story of a remarkable friendship between 12-year-old Pippa and an injured thylacine pup, which she rescues from near-death and decides to raise in secret. But when Pippa's discovery is exposed, forces beyond her control threaten to take her beloved tiger away - unless she can find a way to stop them and reunite the pup with its family. *The Last Tiger* is the first family feature film from writer/producer Leigh McGrath and executive producer/script editor Stephen M. Irwin, whose credits include [Harrow](#), [Tidelands](#) and [Australia Day](#).
- **This Suburban Life:** A coming of age feature film set in the outer suburbs of Melbourne in 2007, where two inseparable teenage boys, Matteo and Andre, from contrasting socioeconomic backgrounds spend every moment of their waking lives together. However, when the growing pains of Matteo's mother's financial struggles become too much, and Andre stumbles upon the indiscretions of his father, the boys run away, embarking on a journey into the bustling city. A story of self-discovery, friendship, identity, *This Suburban Life* is from writer/director/producer Gabriel Carrubba, writer/producer Luke J. Morgan and producer Zane Borg whose credits include [Sunflower](#).
- **Willy:** From Ludo Studio, Mad Ones and Sad Man Studio, *Willy* is a 10-part coming-of-age fantasy set in 2003 Far-North Queensland, which follows 15-year-old barely-closeted Willy Davis as he struggles to navigate puberty in the farming town of Toee, (mis)guided by a private cast of imaginary friends. As if things weren't sticky enough, the arrival of hot new neighbour Jack threatens to bust Willy's vibrant but carefully constructed inner-world wide open, changing the lives of Toee locals forever. *Willy* is created by Samuel Leighton Dore ([Showboy](#)) and Bradley Tennant, with a proof-of-concept animation featuring voices from Judith Lucy, Anne Edmonds, Reuben Kaye and Danielle Walker. The series will be also written and directed by Leighton-Dore, produced by Liam Heyen ([Erotic Stories](#)) with development producer Chloe Hume, and executive produced by Daley Pearson ([The Strange Chores season 2](#)) and Charlie Aspinwall ([Bluey season 3](#)).

For the complete list of development funding approvals refer to [television](#) and [feature film](#) breakdowns.

ABOUT STORY DEVELOPMENT FUNDING

Teams with scripted projects for TV and film platforms can apply for development funding from two program strands - the Generate Fund and the Premium Fund.

The [Generate Fund](#) is for lower budget projects with an emphasis on new and emerging talent, or experienced talent wanting to take creative risks. The [Premium Fund](#) is for higher budget projects of ambition and scale from successful screen content makers.

Online projects can receive support through the [Online Development Fund](#), which supports emerging screen creatives in developing the creative materials of their scripted or documentary projects.

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