

How best to develop a globally innovative and competitive film industry

1. Boost private script development

To compete globally Australia needs to support great ideas early and let market factors have an influence.

- Institute matched funding for script development for production companies that invest in their own development slate
- Allow inexperienced writers to receive concept funding if they have a writing mentor
- Boost script labs, incubators, residencies & workshops (e.g. through screen development organisations)
- Encourage original, distinctive storytelling: indigenous voices / global outlook / genre movies

2. Establish a studio system

Australia has the opportunity to evolve into a true export industry by producing commercial projects to complement its arthouse production, and distributing these locally and overseas.

- Review trade agreements to protect and grow Australian independent distributors and help them compete with multinationals
- Encourage co-productions and industry linkages with China
- Expand slate funding so production companies can spread risk across production slates (and independent distributors can move into production)
- Encourage infrastructure investment for production companies that want to expand into distribution

3. Refine private investment

Our new private investment system needs to maintain a diversity of production and evolve alongside digital models.

- Streamline accounting & certification processes to make offsets simple and accessible
- Ensure low-budget production can attract private investment
- Review Screen Australia's role every 3 years to ensure an adaptive organisation that best serves the industry

4. Foster independent production

We need to encourage innovation and maverick approaches to production and industry development.

- Encourage philanthropic foundations to finance low-budget production
- Expand national cash prizes for leadership and innovation in the film industry in the form of awards and competitions
- Establish non-recoupable grants for low-budget digital production, expanding on the Indivision scheme

5. Pioneer digital exhibition

Australia has never recovered from selling its cinemas to foreign interests; box office profits go offshore, rather than being reinvested into projects.

- Conduct a review into high-end digital cinema exhibition
- Provide incentives and capital support for independent exhibitors to go digital and compete with the major chains
- Encourage Australian engineers to be at the forefront of this technology
- Subsidise digital cinema roll-out in regional areas

6. Reconnect with audiences

Cinema admissions have never been higher, but Australian films are still not popular.

- Commission a report on what audiences want
- Expand on audience development activities, particularly in regional Australia
- Support guerilla & online marketing strategies to compete with blockbuster advertising
- Support focus group screenings for feature filmmakers who want this

7. Improve industry networks

Sharing information among peers is crucial to compete internationally.

- Partner with private providers to centralise production directories into an up-to-date, accessible online database
- Link cities with regions using virtual networks and a shared knowledge base

8. Expand mentorships & internships

The success of visual effects traineeships shows the importance of formal mentoring in learning craft and retaining industry knowledge.

- Require foreign productions to take on both creative and technical attachments
- Establish structured mentoring programs for budding creatives (writers, directors, composers, etc)

Paul Andersen

April 2008