

Drama Report 2018/19: Spend on Australian titles hits all-time high

Thursday 31 October 2019: Screen Australia’s annual Drama Report released today shows expenditure on drama production in Australia has exceeded \$1.17 billion, made up of a record \$768 million spend on Australian stories including Official Co-productions, and increased foreign production spend of \$410 million. The expenditure on Australian titles was the highest in the report’s 29 year history, driven by an all-time record spend on Australian television and a five-year high spend on Australian features.

The Drama Report measures the health of the Australian screen industry by detailing the production of local and foreign feature films, television, and online programs plus PDV (post, digital and visual effects) activity. ‘Drama’ refers to scripted narratives of any genre and the report tracks productions from the commencement of principal photography, with some titles yet to be released. PDV is reported using two different methods.

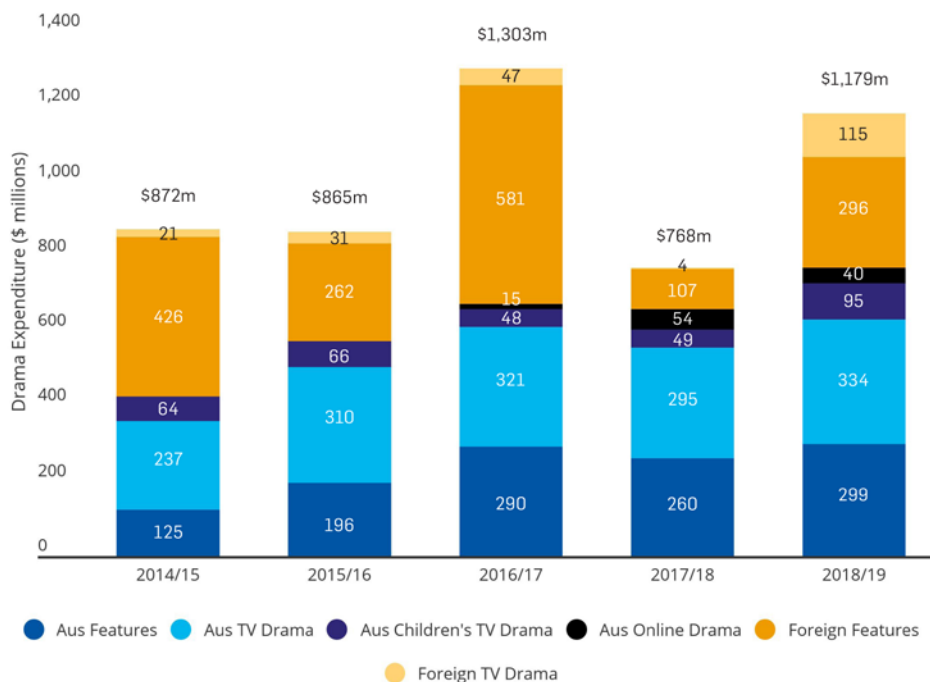
The 2018/19 record expenditure on Australian titles included 37 TV dramas such as [The Hunting](#), [Five Bedrooms](#) and [Total Control](#) and their combined spend was \$334 million, up 13% on last year and above the five-year average. Spend on Australian feature films was up 15% on last year to \$299 million. 33 Australian feature films were made including [True History of the Kelly Gang](#) and [I Am Woman](#) which recently had their world premieres at the Toronto International Film Festival.

15 Australian children’s television programs went into production with \$95 million spent on the likes of [Bluey series 2](#), [Alice Miranda Friends Forever](#) and [The Unlisted](#). This is the highest spend on children’s drama since 2008/09, and a 95% increase on last year.

28 Australian online drama titles with durations of half an hour or more went into production (up from 21 in 2017/18), collectively spending \$40 million.

New South Wales accounted for the largest share of total expenditure in Australia (31%), closely followed by Victoria (30%), and then Queensland (24%). South Australia and Victoria set new records for expenditure in their states.

TOTAL AUSTRALIAN EXPENDITURE



Click [here](#) to view interactive graph.

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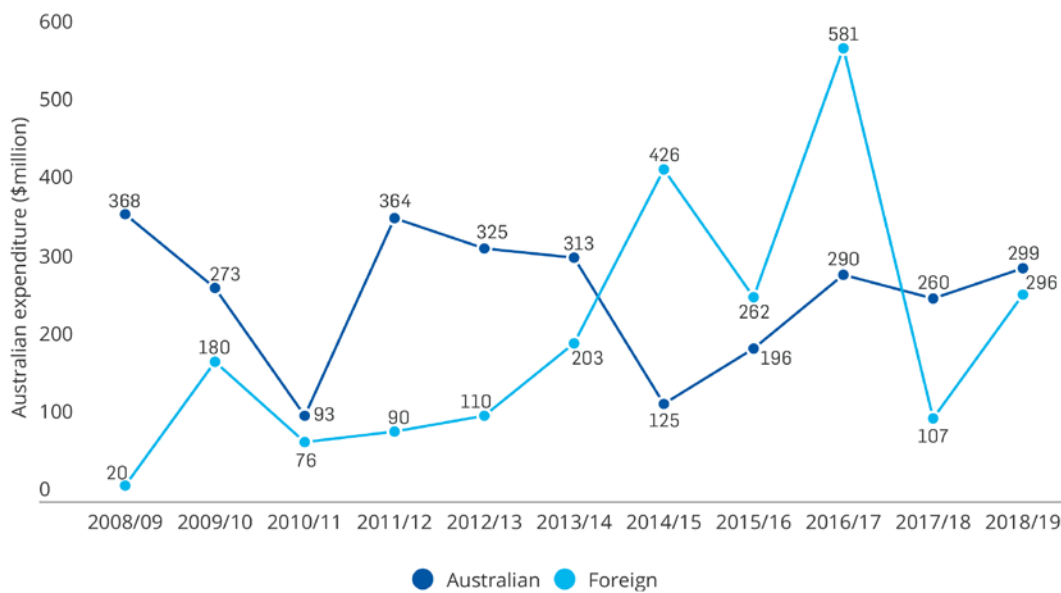
Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts the **Hon Paul Fletcher MP** said, “Australia has a successful film and television industry that is undertaking significant business in the production of both local and foreign drama content. These excellent results are no accident, and are a reflection on the talent of our local film and television industry, the appeal of Australian filming locations, the Australian Government incentives available, state government support and direct funding from Screen Australia. The value of the Drama Report is that it now builds on 29 years of data, giving the Government and industry excellent insight into the health and trends of screen production in Australia.”

Of the titles featured in this year’s report that have already released, there have been a string of hits including [The Hunting](#) which became SBS’s most successful commissioned drama of all time, Disney’s acquisition of [Bluey](#) series one and two for international release and Channel Seven’s [Ms Fisher’s MODern Murder Mysteries](#) which has sold into 26 international territories. Web series [Robbie Hood](#) received wide critical acclaim, and [was described](#) as “the most perfect piece of TV you’ll see this year.” Feature [True History of the Kelly Gang](#) was snapped up by a US distributor [IFC](#) before it had even premiered at TIFF.

Michael Brealey, Chief Operating Officer of Screen Australia said, “To have 65% of total expenditure driven by our home grown stories is remarkable and illustrates the immense demand for Australian content.”

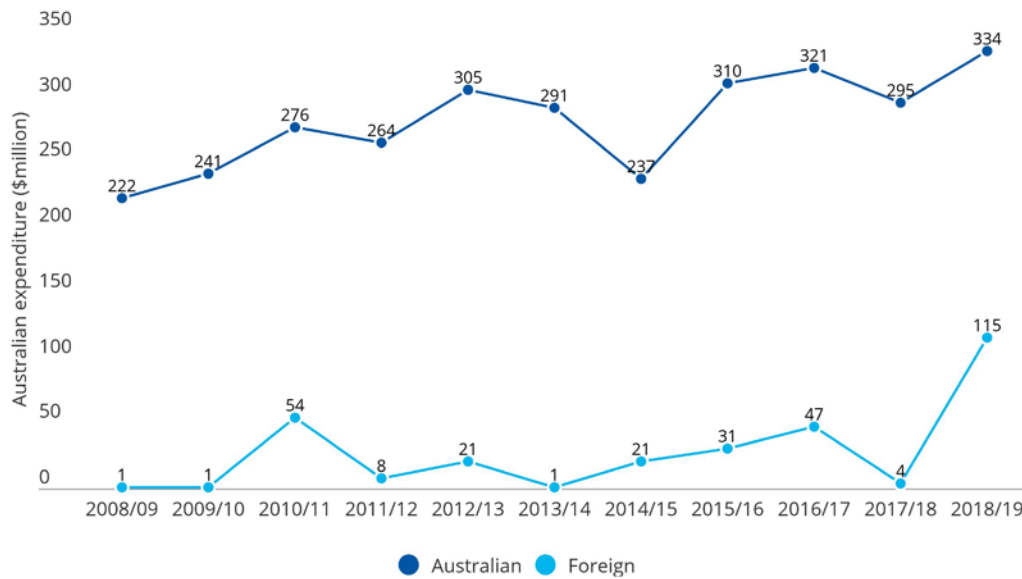
“It’s fantastic to see titles showcasing the diversity of landscapes and depth of talent from around the country. In the past 12 months [H is for Happiness](#) filmed in Western Australia’s Great Southern region, [The Gloaming](#) in Tasmania, [Robbie Hood](#) in Alice Springs, [The Dry](#) in regional Victoria, [Stateless](#) in Adelaide, [Total Control](#) in Canberra and Winton in Queensland, not to mention a second series of fan favourite [Bluey](#) being created in Brisbane.”

PRODUCTION TRENDS: FEATURES - SPEND (\$m)



Click [here](#) to view interactive graph.

PRODUCTION TRENDS: TV DRAMA (EXCLUDING CHILDREN'S) - SPEND (\$m)



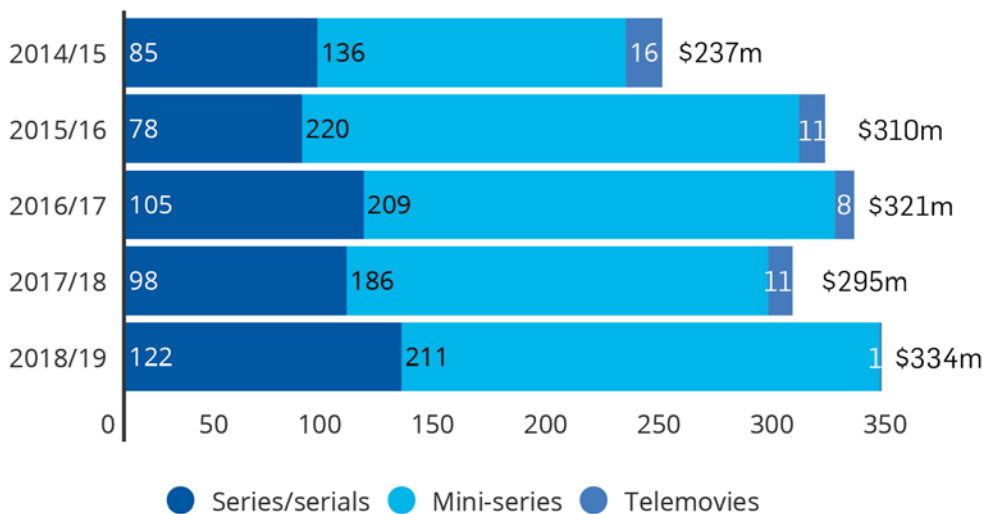
Click [here](#) to view interactive graph.

TELEVISION

Australian TV drama production had a record high \$334 million spend, with 37 titles generating 441 hours of content produced. Hours were up on last year due to the production of longer-running mini-series such as [My Life is Murder](#) (10 episodes) and [Les Norton](#) (10 episodes). Across the total TV drama slate the hours, budgets, spend and average cost per hour for all titles increased year-on-year.

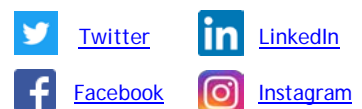
New titles in production included the forthcoming [Upright](#) for Foxtel, [Stateless](#) for ABC and [The Secrets She Keeps](#) for Network 10.

AUSTRALIAN TV DRAMA: SPEND (\$m)

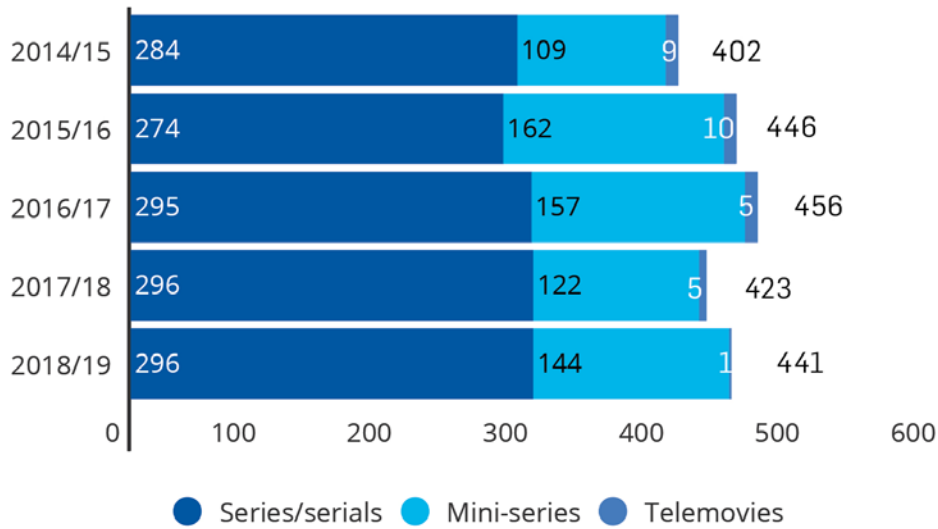


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AUSTRALIAN TV DRAMA: HOURS PRODUCED



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CHILDREN'S TELEVISION

15 children's TV dramas entered production in 2018/19, including two Official Co-productions. Of the 15, seven were for the ABC, one for NITV, six for the commercial broadcasters and one for Foxtel. The 15 titles generated a five-year high of 132 hours of content at a total cost of \$105 million. The number of titles, hours, budgets and spend for the total slate were all above the five year averages, and live action production significantly increased to 61 hours, the highest level since 2012/13.

As a first release broadcaster, the ABC commissioned nearly half of the 15 children's TV titles in production including five live action titles [Hardball](#), [The Inbestigators](#), [Itch](#), [Mustangs FC series 2](#), and [The Unlisted](#) and two animations [100% Wolf](#) and [Bluey series 2](#). NITV was the first release broadcaster for the second series of [Little J & Big Cuz](#). The series was also financed by the ABC.

Nine was the first release broadcaster for three titles including [Alice Miranda Friends Forever](#). Seven was first release broadcaster for two titles, while Network 10 and Foxtel were first release broadcaster for one title each.

Content quotas on commercial free-to-air broadcasters are cyclical in nature with one and three-year requirements for children's drama. The 2018 calendar year marked the beginning of a new three year cycle for first release Australian children's drama requirements. The Australian Communications and Media Authority ([ACMA](#)) tracks how each network complies with their content requirements.

FEATURES

33 Australian features went into production including three Official Co-productions, with a spend of \$299 million being driven by the production of titles including [Peter Rabbit 2: The Runaway](#), [The Dry](#) and [Miss Fisher and the Crypt of Tears](#). Three Official Co-productions started production in 2018/19 including [Dirt Music](#) (UK), [Escape from Pretoria](#) (UK) and [Buckley's Chance](#) (Canada).

The 33 features that started production in 2018/19 had total budgets of \$316 million, with the largest proportion (79%) being made for under \$10 million. The 2018/19 feature slate saw fewer titles in both the upper and lower budget ranges with 6% of films made for under \$1 million (20% in 2017/18) and 21% for over \$10 million (25% in 2017/18).

ONLINE

The Drama Report measures online dramas that were a single episode or series with total durations of 30 minutes or more that have premiered in Australia online. Online titles can premiere on social platforms such as YouTube and Facebook, subscription services such as Stan and Netflix, and broadcaster platforms such as ABC iview.

In 2018/19, 28 Australian titles were made for first release online including two single-episode and 26 series titles, an increase on last year's 21 titles. Overall budgets remained steady at \$53 million, however Australian spend of \$40 million was down 25% on last year due to some titles spending a significant amount overseas.

Titles in production included ABC iview's [Content](#) and [Sarah's Channel](#), [Robbie Hood](#) for SBS on Demand, Stan's [Bloom](#) and [The Other Guy series 2](#), and Australia/New Zealand Netflix Official Co-production - [The New Legends of Monkey series 2](#). Titles made for release on YouTube included Auntie Donna's [Glennridge Secondary College](#) and Canneseries Best Short Form Series winner, [Over and Out](#).

FOREIGN PRODUCTION

Total spend on foreign shoot and PDV-only titles totalled \$410 million in 2018/19, more than three times higher than 2017/18 (\$111 million), and well above the five-year average (\$378 million). Causing this spike was expenditure of \$297 million on 11 foreign titles shot in Australia including *Dora and the Lost City of Gold*, *Monster Problems* and *Godzilla vs Kong*. \$113 million was also spent on 26 PDV-only titles, up 16% on 2017/18.

Foreign feature expenditure totalled \$296 million in 2018/19, almost three times higher than last year. Contributing to the result were seven foreign features shot in Australia as well as 21 PDV-only features that included *Men in Black: International*, *It: Chapter Two* and *Jumanji: The Next Level*.

Total foreign TV drama activity accounted for \$115 million in Australian expenditure in 2018/19, up significantly on 2017/18 (\$4 million) and the strongest result in more than a decade. Nine titles contributed to the result, including five PDV-only titles, however the increase was driven by the second-highest spend on record for the four foreign TV series shot in Australia - *Reef Break*, *Preacher* series 4 (US), *If Time Flows Back* (China) and *Nirasha* (Sri Lanka).

Several factors contributed to the growth in foreign production such as the fall in the Australian dollar, the [Federal Government's \\$140 million Location Incentive](#) announced in May 2018, and the introduction of 10% PDV rebates by the NSW and Queensland state governments. Victoria and South Australia also offer funding incentives that complement the 30% Federal PDV Offset. Additionally, the Australian Government [announced in April 2019](#) that television series and mini-series for online streaming platforms are eligible for the Location and PDV Offsets.

The Location Incentive has already had an impact on future production with six titles announced as shooting in Australia - *Marvel's Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* and *Thor: Love and Thunder* are headed for NSW, while TV series *Shantaram* and *Clickbait* will shoot in Victoria. The Federal Government has also announced it will be providing \$30 million to Dick Cook Studios to shoot two new adventure/fantasy films, *Ranger's Apprentice* and *The Alchemyst* in Victoria and other locations in Australia.

POST, DIGITAL AND VISUAL EFFECTS (PDV)

To provide a sense of the ongoing business activity of PDV companies in a given financial year, the PDV Services section towards the back of the Drama Report uses a different data timeline to the rest of the document. In this section, a project's total PDV spend is reported as it occurs, rather than attributing the whole amount to the year in which work commenced.

PDV expenditure on Australian and foreign drama titles totalled \$261 million, down 8% on last year but 6% above the five-year average. Driving the result was spend of \$153 million on PDV on Australian titles, down 12% on last year's nine year high, but 18% above the five-year average. Domestic titles generating PDV expenditure in 2018/19 included [Peter Rabbit 2: The Runaway](#), [Dirt Music](#), and [Danger Close: The Battle of Long Tan](#).

SCREEN AUSTRALIA

Screen Australia's Annual Report was tabled in Parliament on 22 October 2019, and revealed that the agency provided nearly \$48 million in **production** funding for drama titles. That included \$19.57 million for television drama, \$13.98 million for features, \$6.86 million for children's television, \$4.33 million for online productions and \$3.23 million for Indigenous productions.

Additional funding was injected into the industry for drama development, documentary, talent development, distribution, international marketing, festivals and guild assistance, with nearly \$76 million in direct funding flowing to the sector through Screen Australia in 2018/19.

Of the Australian productions tracked by the 2018/19 Drama Report, 61% of feature films, 54% of television shows, 60% of children's television and 86% of online projects received production funding from Screen Australia.

RESOURCES

- Read the full report [here](#).
- Listen to Screen Australia COO Michael Brealey discuss the Drama Report [here](#).
- Images for media editorial use can available to download [here](#).