

Screen Australia announces \$2 million in funding for 11 documentaries

Thursday 24 October 2019: Screen Australia has announced \$2 million in production funding for seven projects through the Documentary Producer Program and four projects through the Commissioned Program.

The projects include a feature documentary from Christiaan Van Vuuren and Craig Reucassel about the power of money in our political system called *Democracy Project*; a short documentary *The Dreamlife of Georgie Stone* from transgender activist Georgie Stone and director Maya Newell ([Gayby Baby](#)); and three new single documentaries for SBS's Untold Australia strand.

Bernadine Lim, Screen Australia's Head of Documentary said, "We are thrilled to support such a range of projects from all over Australia that shed light on a number of critical issues including climate change, human rights, inclusion and wildlife protection."

"It's particularly exciting to support inventive storytelling methods with students shooting their own footage about the recent school climate strikes in *More Learning, Less Activism*, and feature documentary *Ablaze* featuring musical performances from director and opera singer Tiriki Onus as he delves into a mystery about his grandfather."

The projects funded through the Producer Program are:

- ***Ablaze*:** A feature documentary from JOTZ Productions about opera singer Tiriki Onus who finds a 70-year-old silent film believed to be made by his grandfather, Aboriginal leader and filmmaker Bill Onus. As Tiriki travels across the continent and pieces together clues to the film's origins, he discovers more about Bill, his fight for Aboriginal rights and the price he paid for speaking out. *Ablaze* is co-directed by Tiriki Onus and Alec Morgan ([Australia in Colour](#)), produced by Tom Zubrycki ([Fair Game](#)) and executive produced by Sue Maslin ([The Show Must Go On](#)). This project is developed with support from Screen NSW and financed with support from the Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) Premiere Fund, Film Victoria and the Documentary Australia Foundation.
- ***Democracy Project*:** The first feature documentary from writer/director Craig Reucassel ([The War On Waste](#)) and presenter Christiaan Van Vuuren (*Bondi Hipsters*), which explores the extent to which money has infiltrated Australian politics. After Van Vuuren's [anti-gun YouTube song](#) went viral, he realised that Australian gun laws are not as tight as he initially thought. The documentary will follow Van Vuuren on a mission to uncover issues beyond just gun control, in a democratic system where money and influence cross paths. The creative team includes producer Aline Jacques ([Living Universe](#)) and executive producers Jen Peedom ([Mountain](#)) and Jason Burrows ([Between a Frock & A Hard Place](#)) of Jungle Entertainment. This project is developed with assistance from the Shark Island Institute and the ABC.
- ***Hating Peter Tatchell*:** A feature documentary from WildBear Entertainment about Australian-English human rights and LGBTIQ+ activist Peter Tatchell who has affected change by publicly breaking the rules for more than 50 years. This project follows Tatchell on one of his most challenging campaigns, confronting Russia's homophobic laws at the FIFA World Cup in Moscow. Written and directed by Christopher Amos (*Dressed As A Girl*), *Hating Peter Tatchell* is produced by Veronica Fury and Dena Curtis who worked together previously on [Ella](#) as well as Lee Matthews ([Emo: The Musical](#)).
- ***More Learning, Less Activism*:** A three-part digital series about the students from around Australia who defied calls to stay in school and organised the School Strike 4 Climate rally in March 2019. Told by the students themselves, this project delves into how they created one of the largest youth-led movements the country has ever seen and how young people feel about their future. It is written, directed and produced by Rob Innes of Mashup Pictures ([Housemates](#)), and executive produced by

Mish Armstrong ([Outsiders](#)). This project will be released through Junkee Media's online channels. It is financed with support from Junkee Media and crowdfunding through the Documentary Australia Foundation.

- **Quoll Farm:** A 52-minute documentary about a colony of eastern quolls which live in a hidden valley in the Tasmanian wilderness dubbed Quoll Farm. Wildlife expert Simon Plowright lives with the quolls for a year, observing the unique creatures which are under threat from human encroachment. This project is written and directed by Plowright, who is joined by producers Nick Hayward (*Last Devils*) and Simon Nasht ([Frackman](#)). *Quoll Farm* is developed with assistance from Screen Tasmania.
- **The Children in the Pictures:** A feature documentary that provides unprecedented access into Brisbane-based Task Force Argos, a police investigative team dedicated to rescuing children who are sexually abused by highly organised dark web networks. With tens of thousands of children being exploited around the world, Argos is often the only hope these children have of being found. This project is directed by Emmy Award-winning Geoffrey Smith (*The English Surgeon*), writer and producer Akhim Dev ([Storm Surfers](#)), producer Simon Nasht ([Frackman](#)) and executive producer Tony Wright ([The Story of Earth](#)). It is developed with the assistance of Film Victoria.
- **The Dreamlife of Georgie Stone:** A 20-minute documentary from South Australia's Closer Productions that takes viewers into the life of Georgie Stone, one of Australia's most well-known young transgender activists, as she changes laws, affirms her gender and for the first time gains control of her own story. This project is written by Stone and directed by Maya Newell ([Gayby Baby](#)). It is produced by Newell, Matthew Bate ([Sam Klemke's Time Machine](#)) and Lisa Sherrard, and executive produced by Sophie Hyde who previously worked with Newell on [In My Blood It Runs](#).

The projects funded through the Commissioned Program are:

- **Every Family has a Secret series 2:** A second season of SBS's acclaimed series that follows everyday Australians as they seek out the secrets within their families. Presented by Noni Hazlehurst, this season will reveal more dark pasts and hidden scandals that have impacted generations. Returning for season two are director Steve Peddie ([Secrets of Our Cities](#)), producer Claire Forster ([Australian Story](#)) and executive producer Celia Tait ([Don't Stop the Music](#)) of Western Australian production company Artemis Media. They are joined by writer/director Russell Vines ([Shaun Micallef's Stairway to Heaven](#)). This project is financed with support from Screenwest and SBS.
- **Birdsville:** A one-hour documentary from Mint Pictures that tells the story of the remote Queensland town of Birdsville. Home to around 100 people, twice a year the population swells to 10,000 partygoers for the Big Red Bash music festival and the Birdsville Races. This project will capture the chaos of these events and follow the locals over one year as they go through a period of change, with a number of local businesses going up for sale and putting the town's future in question. *Birdsville* has been commissioned by SBS as part of Untold Australia. It is written, directed and produced by Dan Goldberg and executive produced by Adam Kay who previously collaborated on [The Secret Life of Death](#). This project is financed with support from SBS.
- **Bowled Over:** A one-hour documentary for SBS's Untold Australia, which centres on Taboo, a group of drag performers who have found an unlikely following in their town of Ipswich, Queensland. They may have kept a local lawn bowls club financially afloat for the past nine years with their packed-out live shows, but with the impending retirement of Taboo's 'biggest wig' at the show's 10th anniversary, the club's future is again being plunged into uncertainty. The race is on to find a successor. *Bowled Over* is written, directed and executive produced by Mandy Lake ([Snake Boss](#)) of Queensland's Flickchicks which received funding through Screen Australia's [Gender Matters Brilliant Careers initiative](#). It is produced by Meredith Garlick ([Finke: There & Back](#)). This project is developed and produced with investment from Screen Queensland and financed with support from SBS.

- ***Stutter School***: A one-hour documentary from Kalmedia and Southern Pictures for SBS's Untold Australia that provides unprecedented access to a ground-breaking speech program. Viewers will follow four brave Australian stutterers and their families as they undertake a once-in-a-lifetime journey to confront their fears, find their voice and transform their lives. The creative team features director Liz Allen ([Love Me As I Am](#)), producer Heather Nash ([The Mosque Next Door](#)) and executive producer Laurie Critchley ([Love Me As I Am](#)). This project is financed with support from SBS.

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

ABOUT SCREEN AUSTRALIA DOCUMENTARY FUNDING

The [Documentary Producer program](#) is designed to give producers the foundational funding required to leverage their projects creatively and commercially. It must have a clear path to audience but marketplace attachment is not required at the application stage.

The [Documentary Commissioned program](#) is designed to support the production of a diverse range of quality projects for television broadcast, SVOD or similar. It must offer a compelling vision with a clear and enduring cultural value, and have a local presale with a minimum license fee at application stage.

Screen Australia is currently revising its documentary funding programs, and industry are invited to [provide feedback](#) by 27 October 2019.

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