

Gender Matters 2021

Correct as of 27 October 2021

‘Gender Matters’ is the umbrella name of Screen Australia’s efforts to address the underutilisation of female talent in key creative roles in the Australian screen industry.

TIMELINE

- **May 2015:** Screen Australia released [historical, industry-wide data](#) of female participation in the production of Australian film and documentary across the roles of producer, director and writer. The data formed part of the *Women in Film* issue of AFTRS’ Lumina magazine.
- **December 2015:** Screen Australia released its study [Gender Matters: Women in the Australian Screen Industry](#). Across two funding years (2013/14 and 2014/15), the gender balance of development and production funding applications coming into Screen Australia were published. On the same day, [Screen Australia announced](#) its \$5 million Gender Matters five-point plan, Taskforce and KPI.
- **January 2016:** [Applications opened](#) for Screen Australia’s Gender Matters: Brilliant Stories and Brilliant Careers funding programs.
- **April 2016:** Screen Australia [confirmed receipt of 452 applications](#) for Brilliant Stories and Brilliant Careers, which is the most ever received for a funding program.
- **July 2016:** [Recipients announced](#) for Brilliant Stories and Brilliant Careers funding.
- **July 2016:** [Guidelines announced](#) for the Better Deals and Attachments for Women programs.
- **March 2017:** An [interim update](#) on the Gender Matters five-point plan was released.
- **August 2017:** The [first tracking data](#) against the Gender Matters KPI was released covering the latest two financial years (2015/16 and 2016/17). The Gender Matters Taskforce was also expanded.
- **May 2018:** Screen Australia updated its guidelines for General Drama and Children’s Programs to stipulate that unless in exceptional circumstances, at least one female director must be used on extended television series (where there is more than one filming block).
- **August 2018:** The [second tracking data](#) against the Gender Matters KPI was released revealing that on a three-year average, Screen Australia met its overall Gender Matters target for the first time since the initiative was launched, with 51% of all projects receiving production funding having at least half of the key creative roles occupied by women.
- **August 2019:** The [final tracking data results](#) for the Gender Matters KPI was released showing Screen Australia exceeded its long-term Gender Matters KPI, with 56% of projects receiving production funding having at least half of the key creative roles occupied by women, based on a three year average. With the conclusion of the original three-year KPI period, Screen Australia set a new Gender Matters target based on a headcount system.
- **October 2020:** [The first tracking data was released](#) showing Screen Australia is on track to meet its new Gender Matters KPI at the end of 2021/22, in 19/20, 57% of key creative roles across all projects that received development and production funding were women.
- **October 2021:** The [second tracking data was released](#), showing Screen Australia remains on track to meet its new Gender Matters KPI: in 2020/21, 55% of key creatives roles across all projects that received development and production funding were women. Combined with the 57% result of 2019/20, the current average for the two years sits at 56%.

GENDER MATTERS FIVE-POINT PLAN

The Gender Matters five-point plan was a series of measures designed to speed up efforts to address gender imbalance in the Australian screen sector. The combined budget of the five streams was up to \$5 million, with most monies disbursed in the 2015/16 financial year.

(1) Assessment criteria changes



From December 2015 an express mention of gender and cultural diversity was added to the Assessment Criteria on **all** Screen Australia funding guidelines (not just Gender Matters funding).

“Other factors including availability of funds, diversity of slate and **the gender and cultural diversity of the team** may also influence Screen Australia’s funding decisions” (addition highlighted in **bold**).

(2) Brilliant Careers (originally called ‘Enterprise Women’)

\$1.882 million was dispersed to 13 organisations who had successfully put forward proposals to either run programs to increase female access to work (e.g. the Australian Directors’ Guild) or to create or expand female-led businesses.

The suite of Brilliant Careers recipients (funded in July 2016) focussed on either slate development or providing career opportunities for individuals, with the aim of creating self-sustaining enterprises. In 2019 Bunya Productions used the funds to host the [Engendered Masterclass](#) which provided an opportunity for 12 female creatives to workshop active projects with internationally renowned writer/producer Raelle Tucker (True Blood) and director Jeremy Podeswa (Game of Thrones).

The [Australian Directors Guild](#) utilised their Brilliant Careers funding to place female directors into TV drama work experience. The approach has been highly successful, with Darlene Johnson capitalising on her shadow directing opportunity on [Home and Away](#), and moving on to direct on ABC series [The Heights](#). Lisa Matthews and Lucy Gaffy both completed shadow directing opportunities on [Doctor Doctor](#) and were both offered directing opportunities on follow up seasons as a result.

(3) Brilliant Stories (originally called ‘Women’s Story Fund’)

\$1.867 million for the **development** of 45 female-led **dramas** that satisfied the ‘three tick test’ (which also allowed for men to be part of the teams). The drama projects spanned film, television and online, with the expectation that a number would go into production, and/or the development experience may propel the creative teams into other work.

Disbursement of funds detailed in the [2015/16 Annual Report](#) page 71-73. [Full blocklines available](#).

Several projects developed through Brilliant Stories have been released including features [Ride Like A Girl](#) which was the highest grossing Australian film in 2019, [Relic](#) which launched on Stan in July 2020, and web series [Sheilas](#).

(4) Attachments for Women

Projects funded by Screen Australia in 2016/17 with a budget of over \$500,000 were required to include a paid attachment for a woman as part of the production budget. Screen Australia would contribute up to \$20,000 per attachment, up to \$1 million total.

The scheme was so successful that it was expanded for 2017/18 to become the [Inclusive Attachment Scheme](#).

Disbursement of funds is not itemised in the Annual Report as the funding is included in the individual project’s budget.

22 women completed Gender Matters Attachments on TV and film projects including Billie Egan who was attached to production designer Felicity Abbott on [Ladies in Black](#), Grace Taylor who was a producer’s attachment on [Riot](#), and Lizzie Cater who was attached to the Post Supervisor on [Picnic at Hanging Rock](#).

(5) Better Deals (originally called ‘Distribution Guarantee Support’)





A funding pool of up to \$1 million over two years to incentivise distributors to support female-led feature films, offering matched funding of up to \$300,000. The scheme was not limited to projects funded by Screen Australia and applications were [open until the end of 2017/18](#).

Two films ([The Nightingale](#) and *The Call Back* now known as [The Flip Side](#)) received Better Deals funding and this commitment was recorded in the [2016/17 Annual Report](#) page 89 (totalling \$500,000).

INITIAL GENDER MATTERS KPI

The Gender Matters KPI set in 2015, was that by the end of 2018/19, half of the projects that receive Screen Australia production funding would have women occupying at least 50% of key creative roles. Screen Australia exceeded the KPI, with 56% of projects receiving production funding having at least half of the key creative roles occupied by women, based on a three year average.

More data is available [here](#).

NEW KPI 2019/20 - 2021/22

With the conclusion of the original three-year KPI period, Screen Australia set a new Gender Matters target based on a headcount system in August 2019. Across a three year average (2019/2020 to 2021/2022) at least 50% of the key creative roles (writers, producers and directors) across all projects that receive Screen Australia development and production funding will be women.

Unlike the original Gender Matters KPI, the new KPI does not include the role of protagonist. Screen Australia will continue to collect this data and annually report on the percentage of protagonists that are female for successful feature, television and online drama development and production applications.

The 2019/20 KPI update is available [here](#). The 2020/21 KPI update is available [here](#).

GENDER MATTERS FAQs

Why is the data range of the report *Gender Matters: Women in the Australian Screen Industry* different to the tracking of the Gender Matters KPI?

The new Gender Matters KPI relates to **development and production** funding across **all** Screen Australia programs, including features, documentary, television, online, the First Nations Department, and special development and production initiatives where data is available to Screen Australia. While the KPI does not include the gender of protagonists, data on protagonists in drama projects is provided to explore the on-screen representation of women.

The 2015 report considered a smaller production funding sample data set (features, documentary and television). The earlier report also included development funding in an attempt to understand if the problem lay in a shortfall of supply (not enough female-led projects in development), conversion (not enough female-led projects transitioning from development into production) or a combination of both. The 2015 report did not include data on protagonists, but did include executive producers.

What was the impact of the initial Gender Matters KPI?

The initial KPI encouraged collaboration by measuring female participation in each creative team on projects that received production funding. It set the goal that by the end of 2018/19, half of the projects that receive Screen Australia production funding will have women occupying at least 50% of key creative roles, across a three-year average.



Screen Australia exceeded its initial Gender Matters KPI: 56% of projects that received production funding from 16/17 to 18/19 had at least half of the key creative roles occupied by women. Participation increased across a number of roles. For more information, see [here](#).

How is the new KPI different to the old KPI?

The initial KPI was based on projects. Screen Australia assessed the creative team on each project, by examining whether a female person occupied key creative roles. The gender of protagonists was considered for drama projects, and writers, producers and directors were considered for all projects. If half the key creative roles were occupied by women, the project passed the KPI. Additionally, the initial KPI only focussed on production funding.

The new KPI is based on the gender of key creative roles. Screen Australia counts the gender of every writer, director and producer. Protagonist data is also provided, but does not count towards the KPI. The new KPI encompasses development and production funding, to ensure gender representation is considered from the early stages of projects. Data is provided for specific funding streams to identify areas which may require targeted assistance.

Why is the KPI based on the number of successful applications rather than funding dollars?

Basing a KPI on funding dollars would mean big-budget television and film would skew the results.

Screen Australia's KPI is based on the gender of every writer, producer and director role in development and production project, meaning all budget points are equally represented.

How does Screen Australia process and report on the current Gender Matters KPI?

When a project is submitted for development or production funding, the applicant is required to provide gender information about each of the key creatives, as well as a story synopsis.

For drama, when the application is assessed the gender of the protagonist is verified. This data is no longer counted towards the KPI but continues to be recorded and released annually.

See Notes on method in the 2020/21 KPI update [here](#) for more information.

What if somebody doesn't identify their gender?

It is compulsory to identify the gender of a role as female, male, X (Indeterminate/Intersex/Unspecified), or prefer not to disclose, in the application process. Applicants are able to select 'Prefer not to disclose'. This response represented around 1 per cent of roles in 2019/20 data, and rounded to 0 per cent in 2020/21.

Why will the KPI be reported as an average?

The KPI will be reported as a three-year average (across 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22) to ensure the change in female participation has been genuine and sustained. Data will be reported for individual years, across funding programs, to identify areas which require targeted assistance as well as changes over time.

What if a creative team changes after it is funded?

The Gender Matters KPI is based on the **application** data Screen Australia holds at the end of each financial year. Writer, producer and director roles are based on the most recent information processed in Screen Australia's applications database. See Notes on method in the 2020/21 KPI update [here](#) for more information.

When is the Gender Matters KPI reported?

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Screen Australia funds in financial years, so the first Gender Matters KPI tracking data was [released in August 2017](#), the second [was released in August 2018](#) and the third [was released in August 2019](#). Incomplete data periods are not released.

[The first tracking data](#) found that 47% of successful production applications had women occupying at least 50% of key creative roles. However, this data was skewed by television compensating for low female participation in feature film.

The [second tracking data](#) released revealed that on a three-year average, Screen Australia had met its overall Gender Matters KPI for the first time since the initiative was launched, with 51% of all projects receiving production funding having at least half of the key creative roles occupied by women.

The [final tracking data](#) of the original KPI showed Screen Australia exceeded its long-term Gender Matters KPI, with 56% of projects receiving production funding having at least half of the key creative roles occupied by women, based on a three year average.

In October 2020 Screen Australia released the [first year of data](#) for the new KPI, announcing that 57% of key creative roles across approved development and production funding in 2019/20 were held by women.

In October 2021 Screen Australia released the [second year of data](#) for the new KPI, announcing that 55% of key creative roles across approved development and production funding in 2020/21 were held by women. The second year of the KPI data combined with the 57% result of 2019/20 means the current average sits at 56%.

The 2019/20 and 2020/21 data shows that the agency is on track to meet its new KPI that, across a three year average (19/20 to 21/22) at least 50% of the key creative roles (writers, producers and directors) across all projects that receive Screen Australia development and production funding will be women).

The final reporting on the new KPI will be released after the end of 2021/22.

Why does the Gender Matters KPI not get reported more frequently?

Screen Australia maintains a small in-house Research team, as such it is cost prohibitive to do more frequent updates.

Furthermore, reporting more frequently would be misleading as funding deadlines vary widely across the agency e.g. some funding is in quarterly rounds whilst others are open all year.

Is Screen Australia's funding on the public record?

Yes. Screen Australia's [Annual Reports](#) itemise all funding, including creative teams where applicable.

The Screen Australia website also details the blocklines of approved projects - this can be found in the 'Funding Approvals' section of the relevant funding stream e.g. [feature film](#). The Funding Approvals are updated as soon as a project is formally announced, which can be delayed up to a maximum of six months. Delays are almost always due to commercial reasons e.g. a project may not be fully financed, or a broadcaster may wish to keep it confidential until a show is cast.

Screen Australia releases yearly aggregated data on the gender of key creative roles. As an Australian Government authority, Screen Australia complies with relevant legislation and privacy principles in regards to the collection and disclosure of personal information, including the gender of key creatives. Unsuccessful applications are not made public.

Why are initiatives counted towards the KPIs?

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Screen Australia's KPI captures the development and production funding of specific projects. Screen Australia frequently announces special opportunities that fund development or production across specific topics (e.g. [ABC Love Bites](#)), formats (e.g. [The Guardian documentary initiative](#)) or career levels (e.g. [Google Skip Ahead](#)). Initiatives that provide development or production funding to specific projects are included. Initiatives that do not fund the development or production of specific projects, such as talent development workshops, are not included. Relevant initiatives that are managed by third parties are included in the dataset when data is available.

Does gender disparity start before or after film school?

The results are mixed and vary widely by school and year. Film schools might have 50% female graduates across an entire year, but significant gender discrepancies arise when you drill down into specific courses, especially in areas of study outside the writer/producer/director streams. Film schools are aware of this disparity and are actively trying to make their courses more accessible. In 2019, all major film schools supplied four years of graduate data broken down by gender ([see appendix](#)).

Is Screen Australia a male-led organisation?

Diversity and inclusion are at the core of the way Screen Australia is run. As at October 2021, women hold executive roles at Screen Australia, including Head of Content, Head of First Nations, Head of Legal Services and Producer Offset and Co-Production, and HR Manager.

Women also hold Senior Management roles in Development, Program Operations, Digital Solutions, Producer Offset and Co-productions, Strategic Policy and Industry Insights and Communications.

What does Screen Australia do beyond Gender Matters to help female creators?

Due to the success of the Attachments for Women program, from July 2017 a new Inclusive Attachment Scheme was introduced for all Screen Australia productions. The program includes a paid placement for an emerging creative, with the length of the attachment and the focus being flexible so as to suit the particular theme / direction of the project.

In May 2018 Screen Australia updated its guidelines for [General Drama](#) and [Children's Programs](#) which stipulate that unless in exceptional circumstances, at least one female director must be used on extended television series (where there is more than one filming block).

In July 2018 the agency made [historic changes to its Story Development guidelines](#), removing most barriers to entry. This change was inspired by the success of Gender Matters: Brilliant Stories, which allowed new ideas and talent access to Screen Australia's development funding.

The agency has continued to offer bespoke industry development opportunities, such as the [Brilliant Pitches](#) workshops and public forum held in July 2018, which assisted creatives to pitch their ideas to market.

In January 2021, the Gender Matters Taskforce and Screen Australia [announced two initiatives](#) aimed at supporting women and gender diverse practitioners in the screen industry. The first initiative was Gender Matters Webinars, a series of five webinars covering screenwriting, directing, producing, documentary filmmaking and Heads of Department hosted by Screenworks, in collaboration with Screen Australia, in April and May 2021. The second initiative was Gender Matters Connect, a mentoring program that connects women and gender diverse screen practitioners with mentors, delivered by Women in Film and Television Australia (WIFT Australia) and Screen Australia.

