

Sent: Friday, 4 April 2014 5:31 PM

To: Feedback

Subject: Screen Australia documentary funding review - ABC Commercial submission regarding International Door

This submission is from the Commercial division of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation has distributed Australian productions to a global audience since 1976, and regularly attends global markets as an internationally recognised distribution company. Australian productions distributed by the ABC include the catalogues of NFSA (Film Australia), The Australian Ballet and Opera Australia, as well as the ABC's own productions and productions sourced from independent documentary producers.

This submission relates to the effective distribution activities of the ABC, and any Australian distributor selling to an international market that is increasingly competitive due to a converged media environment and trend towards global deals. In particular, the submission addresses the following question for discussion: Are specific targeted programs such as the current suite of documentary programs efficient and effective? The scope of this submission is restricted to the view of the Commercial division of the ABC in respect of the effectiveness of the International Documentary Program. It is noted that there will be a separate submission from the ABC in relation to the other Screen Australia documentary programs.

Submission:

The ABC support the aim of the International Documentary Program (IDP) in encouraging producers to build and maintain international production partnerships and to bring international funds into Australian documentary productions in addition to domestic broadcast licence fees. However, we believe that the IDP could be more effective in supporting the Australian production industry. Currently, the program requires there to be either a confirmed international pre-sale worth 10% or more of the total production budget or a sales agent managing the international distribution of the production contributing an advance or pre-sale to the value of 10% of the budget for international companies or 20% of the budget for Australian companies. It is the impact of this marketplace attachment requirement that is of particular concern due to its negative impact on the Australian documentary production industry. The requirement is a clear disadvantage to Australian distribution companies. The reach to a broader international audience providing audience and industry recognition for the work of Australian documentary producers can be just as readily achieved by an Australian distributor as an international distributor in marketing Australian productions to generate foreign investment. Further, Australian distributors often have a greater likelihood to generate revenues in the Australian market, which has the potential to be eroded with international distribution companies increasingly demanding world rights in all media to market to a global audience beyond the initial broadcast.

Recommendation:

To permit Australian distributors, bringing foreign investment back into Australian production, to compete in both the international and the Australian market and effectively support the Australian production industry, the marketplace attachment requirement should be the same, no matter where a distributor is based, at a value of no more than 10% of the production budget. To ensure that a distributor has sufficient international reach to properly support producers (in building and maintaining an international profile and in accessing foreign investment), Screen Australia may, for instance, require distributors to demonstrate their international sales capacity.