

**Ruth Harley,  
Chief Executive Officer, Screen Australia**

**37° South Address  
Melbourne International Film Festival**

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- It is an absolute pleasure to be here today for the Melbourne International Film Festival and the 37°South Market.
- Congratulations to Claire Dobbin, Richard Moore and the Board and staff of MIFF for a fantastic line-up. And thanks to Mark Woods and his team for the great job they have done in putting 37°South together and giving me this opportunity to speak to you.
- Today I will cover three areas: Screen Culture, Screen Australia's Marketing Programs and a few thoughts about Screen Culture and Content into the future.
- One of Screen Australia's functions is to support screen culture. And film festivals like MIFF provide a key showcase. Festivals, conferences, marketing, industry research and publications make up Screen Australia's support for screen culture.
- I wanted to open by showing a clip that illustrates why we need Australian screen culture, why the tropes of American screen culture just don't cut it.

**CLIP: A trailer for every OSCAR®-winning movie ever**  
**<http://www.crikey.com.au/2010/03/08/awardtrailer/>**

- A 'one size fits all' approach is no good for national screen cultures. We need the opportunity to create and express our own tropes and touch points.
- Screen culture is the environment in which films and programs are made, seen and discussed as well, of course, as the end result – the overall impact of the stories. A vibrant screen culture plays a vital part in the creation of a flourishing screen industry. And it helps to connect audiences with content – providing platforms of engagement and appreciation as well as debate and discourse.
- The responsibility for a healthy screen culture is shared by a number of players. Screen Australia has a major role alongside the National Film and

Sound Archive, the state screen agencies and governments, local governments and commercial sponsorship as well as the rich array of festivals, events and publications themselves.

- You only have to look at the acknowledgements page in the MIFF program to see how many organisations have had a hand in supporting this festival.
- They should all be applauded for the different ways in which they contribute. For an energetic and diverse screen culture to develop, support from all these players for events throughout Australia is crucial. Culture is by definition a shared responsibility.
- Screen culture is of course just one part of the totality that is Australian culture. Architecture, design, visual and performing arts, software and interactive content, music, writing, publishing as well as the film, television and radio industries are interconnected and interdependent. The health of each of these segments affects many if not all other parts. Therefore when we talk about screen culture we are acknowledging a broader cultural contribution to a number of interconnected industries within the broad church that is Australian culture.
- Our Marketing Department manages a large part of Screen Australia's support for screen culture activities. The Marketing area, like the rest of Screen Australia, is driven by three goals: creative storytelling, audience engagement and increasing business sustainability.
- We support the production community through a diverse range of marketing activities. We partner in events like 37°South with key industry players. We engage in strategic collaborations with specialist organisations. US company Emerging Pictures is showcasing Australian films in the US. Recent releases are *The Waiting City* and *Charlie and Boots*. We offer professional development opportunities like *Working the X-Factor*. We help to promote Australian screen product and talented practitioners domestically and internationally.
- We are reviewing our Marketing programs in the context of a reduced Government allocation and a changing media landscape. Our marketing activity is currently focused on five areas of activity: distribution, business facilitation, professional development, promotion and screen culture.
- Our theatrical **Prints and Advertising (P&A) program** provides distributors with loans to share the risk of mainstream domestic campaigns designed to increase audience size and revenue. For example, Screen Australia partnered with Roadshow to share some of the risk involved with the 230+ print release of *Bran Nue Dae*. Joel Pearlman and his fantastic marketing team felt encouraged to give the film a broad release and in turn we benefited from a fabulous audience response, with the film making some \$7.6 million at the box office.
- The P&A fund is working well to contribute towards growing box office results and the subsequent ancillaries. This financial year we will again

have a revolving fund of \$2 million to assist a broad range of Australian films to be more ambitious in reaching their audience.

- Screen Australia also plays an important role in encouraging new thinking around how we can share Australian content with audiences. To achieve this, we are rejigging the innovative distribution function by devolving its management to a number of distribution partners. The **Innovative Distribution Partnership Program** recognises that new models are enabling access to expanding markets.
- The Program offers the opportunity to enhance the marketing, promotion and advertising activity of a wide variety of Australian content including low-budget feature films, documentaries, short films or content made for online and mobile platform delivery. The aim is to increase audiences for content that does not fit into a traditional distribution and exhibition paradigm.
- For example, one project that we are supporting explores the potential for reformatting existing material through emerging distribution channels. Over the last two years Arenamedia, led by one of our Board members, Robert Connolly, has been repurposing their existing catalogue of film. The 2001 film *The Bank* is being reworked into 16 x 5-minute mobisodes designed for online and mobile devices. Arenamedia is targeting audiences via sites like iTunes, Amazon.com and ABC Online as well as digital media sites, telco websites and third party corporate websites. They are currently looking at how to create a business model that uses new distribution methods to share existing repurposed content with new audiences.
- While we haven't got a clip from this project ready to show you, I wanted to give you an idea of what it could look like – with a similar idea that has been applied to *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*.

### **CLIP: LORD OF THE RINGS: Return of the king**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxuZuXPouqM&feature=related>

- I am not sure why Arenamedia will need 16 episodes!
- Our Innovative Distribution partners will be funded to release a minimum number of projects for a two-year period. We are very excited about the potential of this and have increased our financial commitment to it. We are calling for proposals from specialist distributors with proven market experience.
- The **Festivals, Special Events and Conferences program** aims to promote Australian productions and practitioners via significant domestic showcases. Funding will be provided to established film festivals, national touring programs and to major standalone conferences.
- These events increase access to curated screen programs and provide opportunities for critical debate. They also support the market profiles of

Australian films. They promote the national industry and its practitioners and play a vital role in growing screen culture.

- **Festivals** help broaden audiences. Because of the important role played by capital city festivals in encouraging new audiences through quality programming, we are locking in triennial funding arrangements for **film festivals in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Canberra**. This includes associated market activity such as 37°South. We have begun discussions with the Northern Territory Film Office regarding a strategic direction for film festivals in Territory and we are about to start discussions with Screen Tasmania about their festival strategy.
- **The next tier of Australian film festivals** also plays a role in increasing audience engagement with current Australian product. We are inviting these festivals to apply for triennial funding. In a climate of reduced allocation, it will be a very competitive round. We will focus our support on festivals that showcase quality Australian productions.
- We are also negotiating three-year funding for SPAA, the Writers' Guild and the Directors Guild. This funding allows them to run masterclasses, workshops and networking events. Triennial funding will also provide support for the annual conferences that are fundamental to encouraging debate and sharing information about screen production. We are also locking in funding to the AIDC to provide certainty for the annual documentary conference.
- **Awards** showcase and promote the achievements of Australian practitioners to audiences. We looked closely at how the awards that we fund met this aim. We have decided to fund only the national industry awards, the AFI and IF Awards.
- Research into our **travel grants** indicated that our support was more generous than any comparable international program. Furthermore much of the travel supported has been non-strategic. We will now provide travel to attend international premieres and market activity at major events in film, new media, documentary, animation and short film. Guidelines will be available on our site from Monday. The experiences of practitioners who are supported for travel will then be shared with others through our website.
- In addition, when feature films are given a Screen Australia letter of interest signalling that they are market ready, they may be eligible for a **\$7,000 travel loan** to enable the producer to advance financing.
- The Dedicated Marketing Budget (aka QMB) means that Screen Australia is now providing the projects it invests in with the funds to create marketing collateral like trailers and key art within the film's budget. Therefore we are anticipating that only non-Screen Australia funded projects will access our **International Festival Materials fund** in the future.

- Screen Australia will offer enhanced business facilitation and services across key markets including MIPTV, MIPCOM, Berlin and Cannes along with networking opportunities and matchmaking activities.
- Our presence at MIPCOM in October includes a **children's content matchmaking event**. It will connect Australian children's producers with international commissioners, distributors and producers to forge co-production partnerships. We are hosting four other producer-networking events. One will be an **Australian spotlight** to showcase talent and content and a **Working with Australia workshop** to explain why and how to do business with Australia through tax incentives and the co-pro program. We also extending our market stand and will provide producers with an opportunity to sublease dedicated space.
- Screen Australia's research and strategy activities also play a role in the development of screen culture through leading discussion about important industry issues.
- Our **Research and Publications Partnerships** will provide funding for new titles and research ideas. This fund will also provide opportunities for those publications that have previously received funding. This program will be focused on audience development for contemporary Australian screen content. A total of \$150,000 will be made available annually.
- As part of this program we are partnering with the ABC on a three-year research project called **Spreading Fictions**. The project asks 'Where do Australians now get their audiovisual stories and how might they get them in the future?' The research will draw a comprehensive picture of audiovisual distribution together with policy implications. The chief investigators on **Spreading Fictions** are Jock Given from Swinburne Uni and Gerard Goggin from UNSW.
- I want to now talk about the future of screen culture and content. But first a clip.

## **SLIDE 17 – CLIP: THE FUTURE OF PUBLISHING**

**[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Weq\\_sHxghcg&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Weq_sHxghcg&feature=player_embedded)**

- I wanted to show you this clip as it made me contemplate the paradoxes of media in an evolving world. There's a lot of change afoot, and this change needs to be embraced by our industry. For example, book sales for Kindle have now overtaken paperback book sales at Amazon.com, the world's biggest bookstore. It is an extraordinary paradigm shift – after 15 years of imagining, it suddenly happened.
- The big issue for us all, is how to maximise the opportunities of the 'digital age'. How do we determine what support is required to continue Australia's screen culture into the future?

- The challenges for us all in the upcoming months and years will be to work closely with Government to help frame what this changing world means. How should Screen Australia and the wider audiovisual sector be funded to continue to provide Australians with a reflection of themselves in an unregulated new space like the NBN?
- Now I want to turn my attention to Screen Australia's submission to the 2010 Review.
- As a background to this Review, Screen Australia conducted new, original research on individual production businesses: analysis of the production credits (producers and production companies) for feature film, TV drama and documentary projects held in Screen Australia's databases; and a survey of production businesses (also drawn from Screen Australia's databases) which have made at least one feature film, TV drama or documentary project over the last 10 years.
- One of the characteristics of consistent and profitable business – and therefore sustainable business – was a greater likelihood to be involved in New Media and to be collaborative and engaged in a broad range of content.
- Only 18% of respondents to our Business Survey are involved in some way in New Media. It's not enough for sure but there are some terrific projects being created.
- These projects include *Slide*, an exciting integrated multi-platform drama experience that tracks five teens as they smash their way into adulthood. The series includes a central destination website, character websites, social networks as well as interactive websites which drive and reflect storylines from the TV series.
- *My Place* is a rich digital media environment. As well as the 52 episodes produced for series 1 and 2, a broadband interactive timescape has been created. This site explores the minute details of each child's life and the events in their world.
- We believe there should be clear opportunities and incentives to assist screen businesses to develop more innovative forms of content like these and to distribute traditional linear stories through innovative means.
- We have highlighted in our submission that low-budget projects and alternative distribution models are currently missing out on the support provided to higher budget projects and those with traditional release strategies. Lowering the QAPE threshold for the Producer Offset is one way to address this. If this were to be combined with increased direct funding support for Australian content in emerging media, it would help address the relatively small amounts of Australian content available on these platforms.

- We have also suggested that Government consider a new 20% Offset for the games sector. This is important given comparative international incentives and the current Australian market structure and pressures.
- For example, in 2005, Melbourne-based Tantalus was one of the final two game developers shortlisted by the North American publisher Midway to tender for the \$10 million game for *Happy Feet*. Despite the geographic advantages, the contract was awarded to a Canadian company because Midway could access a tax rebate. This can't continue.
- A combination of the Offset and development funding would help the games sector make the transition into a more sustainable industry, capable of retaining IP in its work and developing a slate of commercially focused, internationally relevant content.
- This will provide similar advantages to the games sector as exist for feature film businesses such as Kennedy Miller, Bazmark, Animal Logic, etc.

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- As everything changes though – some truths remain – a good story is a good story. Whether you find your immersive content experience on an HD 3D flat screen TV or in the darkened halls of the Regent Theatre or via a game console – compelling content is the key.
- One film that we have recently invested in that I think is destined to excite its audience on the big screen is *Tomorrow When the War Began*, Stuart Beattie's adaptation of the best-selling John Marsden novel. Here is a sneak peak.

## **SLIDE 20 – CLIP: TOMORROW WHEN THE WAR BEGAN**

**<http://www.tomorrow-movies.com/>**

- *Tomorrow When the War Began* opens nationally on 2 September.

**END**