

2018 Year in Review and 2019 Preview

Tuesday 22 January 2019: Today the Motion Picture Distributors Association of Australia ([MPDAA](#)) published the finalised box office data for 2018, rounding out the [series of metrics](#) Screen Australia utilises to measure the health of the local screen industry. Australian films took \$55.9 million at the local box office - the best result since 2015 when *Mad Max: Fury Road* and *The Dressmaker* were released.

“2018 was a stellar year for Australian content, with new local dramas on every free-to-air channel, Foxtel, Stan and Netflix. There were multiple break-out hits including [Mystery Road](#), [Underbelly Files: Chopper](#), [Mr Inbetween](#) and kids sensation [Bluey](#), which were all fan favourites and commercially successful,” said Screen Australia CEO Graeme Mason.

“For Australian films to finish the year with a 4.5% share of box office is remarkable considering our 92 titles were competing with 908 foreign films for cinema space. Landmark films were added to the Australian cinematic canon, including [Ladies in Black](#) and [Sweet Country](#), and we saw the continued resurgence of the feature documentary format led by [Gurrumul](#) and [Working Class Boy](#).” Of the 92 Australian films in market in 2018, 63 were new titles.

“In online, the [Superwog](#) series ended up amassing over 19 million views on YouTube alone. SBS and ABC in particular continued to champion the online original format, with stand-outs including [Homecoming Queens](#) and [Deadlock](#).”

DRIVERS OF SUCCESS

The creation of Australian screen stories has benefited from bipartisan support from successive Australian Governments, including both direct finance for film, television, and online content from Screen Australia, as well as the [Producer Offset tax incentive](#).

“When you look at the 2018 AACTA Award winners, it’s no accident that [10 out of the 11](#) best scripted and documentary categories were won by titles funded by Screen Australia,” said Mason. “Investment in the industry is driving the cultural and commercial rewards we now enjoy, and as a sector we must get better at helping viewers make the connection between their favourite new Aussie show and where the funds to make that program came from.”

“We also need to be more vocal about our impact beyond ratings, box office and clicks. For instance, Australia’s screen industry is our nation’s number one calling card internationally. Tourism Australia’s 2018 [Son of Dundee campaign](#) was completely dependent on international recognition of our immense screen talent. Indeed the [Screen Currency](#) report found that our screen stories generate more international tourism spend than the Sydney Opera House. The output of our screen industry is much more than entertainment.”

2018 also marked the [25th anniversary](#) of Screen Australia’s Indigenous Department, which has been behind iconic titles including [Redfern Now](#) and [Samson & Delilah](#), plus recent fan favourites *Sweet Country*, the *Mystery Road* TV series and documentary [Black Divaz](#). “The Indigenous Department is the gold standard of what can be achieved when creators receive sustained funding to take charge of their own stories. We’re adapting that model to also address the underutilisation of female talent and creators from diverse backgrounds through both our [Gender Matters](#) program and new [development funding](#) opportunities.”

CHANGE & CHALLENGES

The seismic changes in the global media industry have been evident in Australia, including CBS’s purchase of Network Ten, the merger of Foxtel and Fox Sports, the merger of Nine and Fairfax and the Universal Pictures International [takeover of theatrical marketing and distribution](#) of Entertainment One (eOne) releases locally.

“The competition for people’s time and wallet is already fierce, and continues to grow,” said Mason. “The proliferation and availability of screen content is immense, and starkly apparent at the movie theatre where the number of films released in Australian cinemas has more than doubled in the past decade. Ten years ago top Australian free-to-air dramas could reasonably aim for over two million viewers on terrestrial TV, and now any show with more than one million would be considered a hit.” When looking at the [top 50 free-to-air](#)



[titles](#) of any genre, the trends vary by format, for instance news has also seen declines but sport is more cyclical.

However, viewing on catch-up services continues to grow, supplementing terrestrial viewing. For instance, the finale of *Mystery Road* had the highest average number of views for an episode of Australian drama across 28 days (233,000).

Concurrent with audience and media change, the cost to make content is rising. For instance, Screen Australia's [2017/18 Drama Report](#) found the cost to make television drama has risen across most formats, including a 22% rise in just five years to make mini-series, now at \$1.567 million average cost per hour.

Mason noted, "We are now in a situation where there is exponential growth in the amount of content being made, but the cost to make that content is also growing, and there is no substantial new money in the local sector. As an industry we must be quick to find opportunity in this new media landscape, particularly the opening up of access to overseas audiences and hence foreign investors."

"There is abundant proof the global market wants distinctly Australian stories like [Picnic at Hanging Rock](#) and [Lion](#), and are just as interested in Australians making ambitious world stories like [Mad Max: Fury Road](#), [Cargo](#) and [Peter Rabbit](#)."

"We only need look to Every Cloud Production's global hit [Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries](#) to see what engaging with the global market can do. The latest series averaged 1.4 million viewers at home on the ABC, sold to over 200 territories overseas, landed a Netflix acquisition and will soon have a [spin-off series](#) on Channel Seven and a [feature film](#). Incredibly over \$800,000 in finance for the film came from the fans of the show."

"Australian producers with the best concepts that can connect with an audience, whilst being entrepreneurial in their approach to finance and deals, will thrive in this new landscape."

LOOKING FOWARD

Screen Australia monitors the pipeline of Australian production by considering the funds the agency puts into the market (itemised in Appendix 3 of the [Annual Report](#)), and when titles go into production (itemised in the annual [Drama Report](#) or [online for documentary](#)). Television and online typically take 12-18 months to go from funding to release, whereas film takes upwards of 24 months depending on release strategies.

Considering Screen Australia-funded projects only, 2019 is expected to see the debut of at least eight new Australian television shows including [Bad Mothers](#) (Nine), [The Hunting](#) (SBS), [Australian Gangster](#) (Seven), [Mr Black](#) (Ten), [Lambs of God](#) (Foxtel) and [Black B*tch](#) (ABC). Returning series include [Doctor Doctor](#) (Nine) and [The Letdown](#) (ABC). A further four new children's shows are expected including [The InBESTigators](#) (ABC/Netflix), and at least 20 TV documentaries including Christos Tsiolkas' (*The Slap*) debut factual project [The Pool](#) (ABC) and [Australia in Colour](#) (SBS).

The feature film offering has already started with [Storm Boy](#) in cinemas now and a [record-breaking Australian contingent](#) at Sundance later this month, including [Top End Wedding](#) starring Miranda Tapsell and [Hotel Mumbai](#). At least a further five features are expected to debut including [Palm Beach](#), [Slam](#) and Rachel Griffiths' directorial debut, [Ride Like A Girl](#). At least 10 feature documentaries are expected to be released, including Damon Gameau's 2040 [just selected for the Berlin Film Festival](#) and [The Australian Dream](#) centred on AFL legend Adam Goodes.

Over 15 online series are expected to be released this year, including the highly anticipated debut of Auntie Donna's 14-part series [Glennridge Secondary College](#), comedy [Sarah's Channel](#) starring Claudia O'Doherty and tween series [Robbie Hood](#) for SBS.

"At Screen Australia, the first half of the year will be focused on the release of our vision statement for the next 25 years of Indigenous stories. We will also be considering how best to respond to the increasing demand



for documentary funding and the changes in the film distribution landscape. The next incarnation of the hugely successful talent and business-building program Enterprise will be [launched in February](#).”

“Later in 2019 we will measure the results of the full three-year [Gender Matters initiative](#) and examine how to ensure the opportunities for female talent continue to grow. We will also be reviewing the first 12 months of our [development funding changes](#) to check we are achieving our aim of empowering experienced creators to pursue creative risk and ideas of scale, whilst also providing funds to new and underrepresented voices.”

FILM 2018

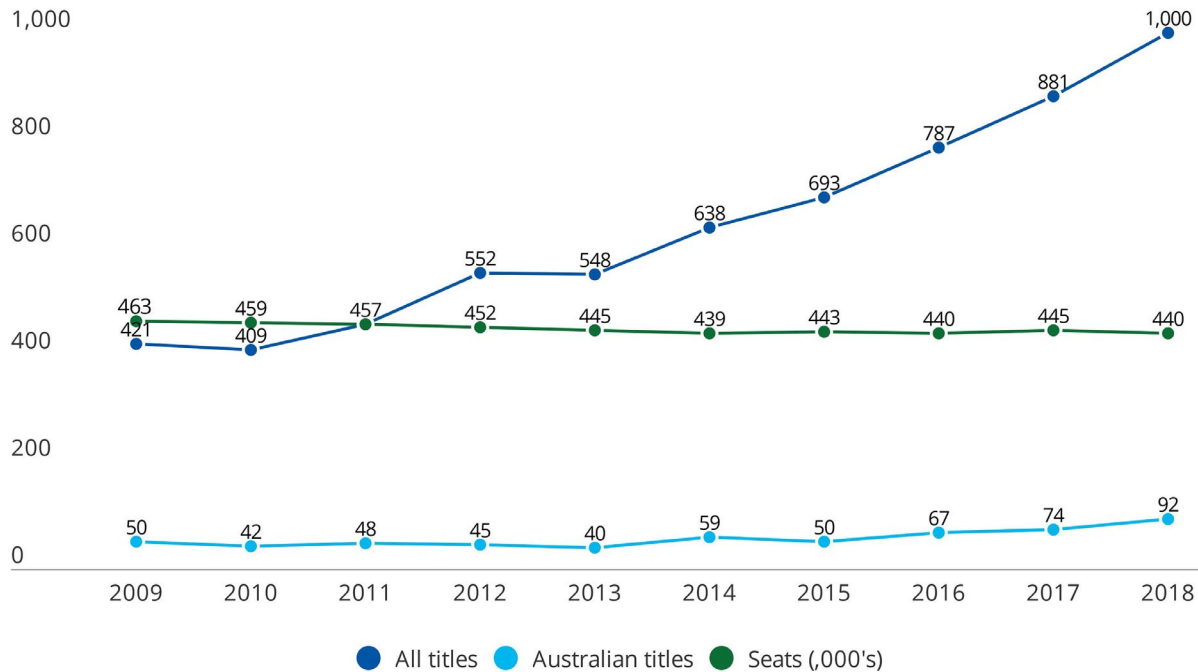
- According to the MPDAA, 1000 films screened in Australian cinemas in 2018, and 758 were new titles. There were 92 Australian films screened, with a record-breaking 63 being new titles, with this number including documentary, special-events (e.g. *Australian Ballet: The Merry Widow*) and micro-budget films that may have only screened at one cinema.
- The top-performing Australian films were *Peter Rabbit* (\$26,750,712), *Ladies in Black* (\$11,968,051 in 2018, \$12,023,808 cumulative), *Breath* (\$4,633,230), *Sweet Country* (\$2,024,030 in 2018, \$2,027,113 cumulative) and *Swinging Safari* (\$1,617,542). *Peter Rabbit* became one of the [top 10 all-time performing Australian films](#) at the local box office, and *Ladies in Black* entered the top 25.
- *Peter Rabbit* was also the top performing Australian film internationally, taking over \$463 million (cumulative) across 88 territories excluding Australia. It became the highest earning Australian film of all time [in the UK](#). The producer of the film Zareh Nalbandian noted, “Without the support of Screen Australia and the Producer Offset program, it would not have been possible to produce *Peter Rabbit* in Australia and over 1700 highly skilled Australians would not have had the opportunity to work on such a creatively and technically challenging production.” Animal Logic are currently in pre-production for the sequel.
- 23 Australian titles screened at six A-list international festivals, led by *The Nightingale* which took the Special Jury Prize and Marcello Mastroianni Award for Best Young Actor at the [Venice Film Festival](#), and *All These Creatures* which won the Palme d’Or Short Film at the [Cannes Film Festival](#).
- The squeeze on indie films regardless of their country-of-origin, which was [flagged last year](#), continues. Of the 1000 films that were screened at Australian cinemas in 2018, 47 were blockbusters and they took 52.4% of the total box office.
- Despite 2018 having the most Australian releases on record, over the past decade the volume of Australia’s output has been cyclical. By comparison, the volume of total titles screening at the cinema has increased exponentially, yet the number of cinema seats has declined largely due to the trend towards more luxurious cinema offerings (i.e. bigger seats mean fewer seats fit).



Australian Government



AUSTRALIAN THEATRES: TITLES RELEASED AND SEATS 2009-2018



Source: MPDAA All films screening 2009 – 2018 (as at 21 January 2019)



TV 2018

- Nine's *Underbelly Files: Chopper* was the most watched Australian free-to-air drama.
- The ABC's *Jack Irish* was the most popular recurring Australian drama, with Nine's *Doctor Doctor* also in the top-5 dramas, and [renewed for a fourth season](#) to air in 2019.
- *Mystery Road* was a notable new addition to the drama landscape, with the show a critical and commercial hit, becoming the most watched non-children's series in ABC iview history. Furthermore, the show aired in the UK and US, nabbing the 'Critics Pick' in the New York Times and being the number one show on BBC4 every week it aired. A second season is now in development.
- In the same year, children's animation *Bluey* became the most watched ABC iview show in history. It has amassed an incredible 21.3 million program plays since its launch in October 2018. *Bluey* also averaged 349,000 viewers across all 26 first release episodes on ABC KIDS.
- Notably the documentary *Working Class Boy*, centred on musician Jimmy Barnes' life, pulled similar ratings to the most watched drama. The documentary also had a theatrical release, taking \$823,022 at the Australian box office.
- Ahead of its Australian release on the ABC in 2019, the four part mini-series, *The Cry*, recently aired on BBC1 in the UK to very strong audiences. Screening Sundays at 9:00pm from 30 September, episode 1 averaged a sensational 9.42 million viewers across TV and online over 28 days, making it the #3 program in all of the UK for the week. Online viewers represented 5% of the total (an average of 507,000 views).

Media enquiries: Scott Dawkins
(02) 8113 5886 | 0403 937 074 | scott.dawkins@screenaustralia.gov.au
www.screenaustralia.gov.au



Twitter



LinkedIn



Facebook



Instagram



Top 10 Australian dramas (all)

Title	Broadcaster	Episodes	Ave. audience (metro + regional)
<i>Underbelly Files: Chopper*</i>	Nine	2	1,455,000
<i>Jack Irish series 2^</i>	ABC	6	1,323,000
<i>Mystery Road series 1*</i>	ABC	6	1,275,000
<i>Olivia Newton-John: Hopelessly Devoted To You*</i>	Seven	2	1,232,000
<i>Doctor Doctor series 3*</i>	Nine	10	1,218,000
<i>Home and Away series 31</i>	Seven	243	1,095,000#
<i>Russell Coight's All Aussie Adventures</i>	Ten	7	1,076,000
<i>True Story with Hamish & Andy series 2</i>	Nine	10	1,037,000
<i>Harrow series 1</i>	ABC	10	1,011,000
<i>The Blake Mysteries: Ghost Stories*</i>	Seven	1	943,000

*Screen Australia funded. ^Screen Australia funded original season. #As at 8 Jan. Figures do not include BVOD (catch-up viewing). See end of release for full source notes.

Top 5 Australian documentaries (Screen Australia funded)

Due to complexities in the definition of documentary, only Screen Australia funded titles are reported here.

Title	Broadcaster	Episodes	Ave. audience (metro + regional)
<i>Working Class Boy</i>	Seven	1	1,469,000
<i>War on Waste series 2</i>	ABC	3	1,030,000
<i>Hawke: The Larrikin and The Leader</i>	ABC	2	1,016,000
<i>The Secret Life of 4 Year Olds</i>	Ten	5	786,000#
<i>Don't Stop The Music</i>	ABC	3	773,000

#As at 8 Jan. Figures do not include BVOD (catch-up viewing). See end of release for full source notes.

ONLINE 2018

- Comedy duo Nathan and Theo Saitden (Superwog) had the top trending YouTube video in Australia from a local creator, and had the [eighth highest trending video in the country overall](#) with their sketch *Highway Patrol*. Their debut long-form series *Superwog* has amassed over 19 million views on YouTube since debuting in October 2018, with a parallel run on ABC Comedy. *Superwog* is the third-most watched Screen Australia funded YouTube series in history.
- The AACTA Award for Best Online Video or Series was dominated by public broadcaster commissioned online original works, including *Homecoming Queens* (SBS), *Kiki and Kitty* (ABC) and category winner *Deadlock* (ABC). All received Screen Australia funding.
- Documentary creator Vanessa Hill launched her *Attention Wars* series [in late 2018](#), focused on the impact of media and social media companies.
- Sheilas* from Hannah and Eliza Reilly became the first Gender Matters project [to be released](#). The comedy series examined four real-life women from Australian history.

Celebrate 2018's Australian stories and get a preview of what's to come in 2019 [here](#).

DATA NOTE: TV

Please source all data when reporting.

- Metropolitan data is copyright to OzTAM and Regional data is copyright to RegionalTAM and may not be reproduced, published or communicated in whole or part without the prior consent of OzTAM or RegionalTAM.
- All ratings are courtesy of OzTAM and RegionalTAM, 5-city-metro, combined markets, total people, average audience, consolidated 28 day except where noted.
- Top 10 Australian drama's (metro viewers): 982,000, 913,000, 846,000, 791,000, 810,000, 683,000, 721,000, 738,000, 693,000 and 642,000. Top 5 Screen Australia funded documentaries (metro viewers): 973,000, 735,000, 713,000, 565,000, 546,000.
- *Mystery Road* (online): OzTAM Video Player Measurement - consolidated 28. VPM Rating: total minutes played divided by content length. Top programs are for episodes with a minimum length of 15 minutes. Includes catch up minutes only and is not restricted to the five metropolitan cities. Live streaming channel viewing is reported separately.
- UK ratings: BARB Weekly Four Screen Dashboard average audience, channel rank (week), total people, consolidated 28. *Mystery Road*: BBC4, week ending 17 Sep - 7 Oct 2018. *The Cry*: BBC1, week ending 30 Sep - 21 Oct 2018.
- *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries*: consolidated 7. Metro viewers: 990,000.
- *Bluey*: (metro viewers): 266,000. Online figures sourced from the ABC.

DATA NOTE: FILM

Please source all data when reporting.

- Australian box office data courtesy of the Motion Picture Distributors Association of Australia
- International box office data courtesy of ComScore.

DATA NOTE: ONLINE

- *Superwog* is the third-most watched Screen Australia funded YouTube series in history based on views accumulated on the producer's channel. Some producers allow their YouTube content to also be published on channels outside of their own.

Change Log: The original version of this media release said "According to the MPDAA, 1000 films screened in Australian cinemas in 2018, and 713 were new titles." On 1 February 2019 this figure was updated on advice from the MPDAA to read "758 were new titles".