

Screen Australia announces \$4 million in production funding for six projects

Wednesday 27 February 2018: Screen Australia has announced production funding for one film, two television series and three online projects totaling \$4 million. The slate includes a film adaptation of the inspiring true story of *Penguin Bloom* starring Naomi Watts, a second season of the ABC's hit drama series *Mystery Road*, and *Roborovski*, a virtual reality animated project from Tilda Cobham-Hervey and Dev Patel about a miniature hamster seeking revenge.

Head of Content at Screen Australia, **Sally Caplan** said: "Screen Australia is committed to funding projects that tell uniquely Australian stories and it's fantastic to see such a diversity of projects being green lit."

"We're particularly pleased to support our content creators to take on new challenges. Tilda Cobham-Hervey, off the back of her directorial debut [A Field Guide To Being a 12-Year-Old](#) winning the Crystal Bear for Best Short Film at Berlinale, is now taking creative risks in the VR space. The producers of [Plonk](#), Nathan Earl and Georgie Lewin are moving further into scripted comedy with mockumentary *Australia's Best Street Racer*."

"Fiona Eagger and Deb Cox from Every Cloud productions are the top of their game and we're delighted to be supporting them in bringing the beloved Pearl Bay into the 21st century rebooting popular series [Seachange](#) with a new generation of characters and community issues."

Head of Indigenous at Screen Australia, **Penny Smallacombe** said, "It's fantastic to be supporting the return of popular television series [Mystery Road](#). *Mystery Road* was Bunya Productions first television drama production and became the highest ranking non-children's show in ABC iview history. The team are poised to build on the success of the first series and we can't wait to see where they take it next."

The funded feature film project is:

- ***Penguin Bloom***: Based on the international best-selling book of the same name, this magical film tells the true and emotional story of a family's extraordinary friendship with a unique little bird. Set on Australia's northern beaches, the film stars Naomi Watts (*The Impossible*) as Sam Bloom, a young mother recovering from a near-fatal accident that has left her unable to walk. As they struggle to come to terms with their new situation, a guardian angel enters their lives in the form of an injured magpie chick, whom they name 'Penguin'. This odd little bird helps them rediscover the preciousness of life, as they learn to heal as a family. Produced by Bruna Papandrea, Naomi Watts and Emma Cooper, the film is directed by Glendyn Ivin ([The Cry](#)) and written by Shaun Grant ([True History of the Kelly Gang](#)) and Harry Cripps ([The Dry](#)). This project was financed with support from Create NSW.

The full list of funded feature films blocklines can be found [here](#)

The funded television projects are:

- ***Mystery Road S2***: A six-part series for ABC that follows Detective Jay Swan (Aaron Pedersen), who returns to solve a grisly murder in a coastal town whose laid back demeanour harbours dark secrets. Bunya Productions' Greer Simpkin and David Jowsey will again produce the series with Ivan Sen on board as Executive Producer. In the new series Jay's investigation will lead him into a shadow world of carpetbaggers and smugglers, of lore and deep lore, pushing him to his very limits and forcing him face to face with his greatest enemy. This project was funded through Screen Australia's Indigenous Department and financed with support from Create NSW.
- ***Seachange - Paradise Reclaimed* (working title)**: An eight-part series for the Nine Network that follows Laura Gibson (Sigrid Thornton) who returns to the beachside paradise of Pearl Bay to attend the birth of her estranged daughter's baby. Rising seas levels, community cover-ups and some very stormy weather conspire to convince her the town now needs her as much as she needs it. The series will be executive produced by Every Cloud Productions' Deb Cox ([Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries](#)) and

Fiona Eager ([Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries](#)), Sigrid Thornton, David Mott from ITV, and Lois Randall ([Grace Beside Me](#)). Deb Cox who wrote for the first three series of the show's original incarnation is on board as the head writer of the reboot working with script producer Kym Goldsworthy ([Deep Water](#)). Film, television and theatre director Wayne Blair whose credits include [The Sapphires](#) and [Top End Wedding](#) is on board as the set-up director. This project was financed with support from Create NSW through its Made in NSW TV Drama funding and Regional Filming Fund.

The full list of funded television drama blocklines can be found [here](#) and Indigenous production funding [here](#)

The funded online projects are:

- **Australia's Best Street Racer:** An 8 x 5 minute mockumentary series that follows eager 18 year old Taylor James as he attempts to infiltrate Launceston's late night street racing scene in his mum's 1994 Holden Barina. The series has been co-created by Michael O'Neill and Dylan Hesp and was developed out of the Screen Australia and Screen Tasmania 2016 initiative Comedy Concentrate. Georgie Lewin ([Plonk](#)) will produce the series, with Nathan Earle ([Plonk](#)) on board as Executive Producer. This project was financed with support from Screen Tasmania.
- **Roborovski:** A 12 minute animated short and virtual reality project that follows Roborovski, an adorable thimble sized hamster that spends his days in Marvin's Pet Shop, hoping to find a family. When he is constantly overlooked by the people and animals around him his seething resentment and intense jealousy soon takes hold and a murderous side of little Roborovski is released. Dev Patel ([Hotel Mumbai](#)), John Collee ([Happy Feet](#)) and Tilda Cobham-Hervey ([I Am Woman](#)) have co-written the project and Patel and Cobham-Hervey are also co-directing. It will be produced by Jomon Thomas ([Hotel Mumbai](#)), Dev Patel, and Tilda Cobham-Hervey and co-produced by Mark Grentell ([The Merger](#)), and Elaine Beckett. Spectre Studios makers of *Wormwood VR* are using cutting edge technology to create this VR and animation project. This project was financed with support from Create NSW.
- **The Listies Work for Peanuts:** A 6 x 8 minute comedy series from kids comedy duo Matthew Kelly and Richard Higgins known as The Listies. This family series will follow the pair as they cycle through a variety of bizarre jobs in order to pay their 10-year-old landlord Abernathy Peanuts. Judi McCrossin ([Time Of Our Lives](#)) and Kate Keegan will produce the series alongside Kelly and Higgins. The series will be directed by Darren Ashton whose credits include [Offspring](#) and [Here Come the Habibs](#).

The full list of funded online blocklines can be found [here](#)