



ScreenWest submission to Screen Australia

STAGE 2 REVIEW OF SCREEN AUSTRALIA

RESPONSE BY SCREENWEST

DATE: 17 FEBRUARY 2009

ScreenWest's comments are focused on the Industry and Cultural Development Funding programs aspect of the Stage 2 Review.

It is noted that there will be further review of the support to Screen Resource Organizations, and ScreenWest welcomes the opportunity to discuss this further with Screen Australia in respect of the operations of the Film and Television Institute (WA) Inc ('FTI').

Overview

ScreenWest has a very strong relationship with the FTI, fostered over many years of working together.

FTI's mission - to foster an innovative and diverse independent screen community and culture throughout Western Australia - dovetails neatly with ScreenWest's objectives.

FTI's focus is to deliver services to members and the wider screen industry, from post formal educational training and before full time employment in the screen industry. The organization has a broad base of members and supporters, and many practitioners in the screen industry in Western Australia have had an association with FTI at some stage in their careers.

The organization is a good entry point for those who wish to work in screen industry, and is one of the key reasons why ScreenWest chooses to partner with the FTI on delivering services to the WA screen industry.

Over the past 38 years since its incorporation in 1971, FTI has generated successful opportunities for independent filmmakers, animators and screen producers in WA and achieved numerous outcomes. Attached is a summary prepared by FTI, and noted by ScreenWest.

Importance of FTI

FTI plays an important role in the development and sustainability of the screen industry in Western Australia, for the following reasons:

1. Isolation of Western Australia

Opportunities to work in the screen industry in Western Australia are comparatively few. ScreenWest has been able to assist growth in the number of production opportunities, however, in contrast to other States, Western Australia has comparatively less:

- Television productions fully commissioned by the broadcasters;
- Advertising, corporate and TVC work;
- Music videos; and consequently;
- Less support, post production, facilities etc and related businesses

Working on projects and developing skills through FTI allows crews to gain experience working on real projects with real outcomes, and therefore gain knowledge, understanding and professional credits to gain work on future productions. FTI acts in this way as a filtering system for the industry in finding those filmmakers who have the aptitude and skills to make it to the professional level.

For example, ScreenWest has outsourced its short film initiatives *Link* and *HyperLink* to FTI.

From ScreenWest's position this allows filmmaking teams to experience:

- Taking on board critical feedback on the creative elements of the production;
- Delivery to a 'commissioning' body;
- Reporting structures;
- Working with professional industry members.

FTI has also long been a good place for industry members to gain key work skills. Some practitioners who have worked at FTI over the years include:

- Paul Barron, former FTI CEO, now independent children's producer.
- Michael Ward, former FTI CEO, now Head of Policy, ABC TV.
- Ross Hutchens, former FTI Project Officer, now independent drama producer.
- Owen Paterson, former FTI employee, now production designer on projects such as *Matrix*.

2. Strong history of delivery of Indigenous program delivery and delivery to regional Australia

ScreenWest and FTI have a strong history of supporting Indigenous development and production. Indigenous production is also a key aspect of ScreenWest's Strategic plan.

The reason for this growth has arisen, in part, due to a need to ensure that Western Australian Indigenous filmmakers are not slipping behind their Eastern States counterparts who have greater accessibility to federally-funded programs.

Indigenous focused initiatives managed by FTI supported by ScreenWest include:

- **Deadly Yarns**

Deadly Yarns invites Western Australia Indigenous filmmakers to explore 'their best, most personal, funniest or deadliest story' as a short documentary or drama and, is designed to develop skills and opportunities for Indigenous writers, directors and producers.

A joint initiative between ScreenWest, the FTI and the ABC, the scheme targets new and emerging Indigenous filmmakers from around the State and over 20 short films have been produced and screened nationally on ABC Television's 'Message Stick' program since the scheme was introduced. The films have also enjoyed great success at national and international film festivals. A new generation of Indigenous filmmakers have evolved over the last four years as a result of this initiative, and the ABC has already commenced negotiating a fifth series of Deadly Yarns.

The series has been recognised with a prestigious national *Australian Business and the Arts Federation* award.

- **Indigenous Media Internship**

The Indigenous Media Internship offers two Indigenous people per year the opportunity to study FTI's 30-week Diploma in Screen and Media (Digital Production) course, followed by a six week professional development work placement at FTI.

The full-time six month Diploma in Screen and Media (Digital Production) course is an intensive hands-on training program where participants gain experience in all the key crew roles in film production including camera, sound, lighting, editing, directing and producing.

As Indigenous people are generally underrepresented both in the vocational training system and within the Australian screen industry, the internships aim to develop a long-term career pathway for Western Australian indigenous filmmakers.

- **Making Movies Roadshow**

The Making Movies Roadshow is an introductory filmmaking workshop which tours to predominantly Indigenous regional centres in WA. The Roadshow is the regional touring arm of FTI that sees three local filmmakers travel by four-wheel drive to the far ends of the state, supporting regional, remote and predominantly indigenous communities in transposing their stories onto the screen.

The Roadshow has been traveling across regional and remote Western Australia for the last six years and has delivered more than 50 filmmaking workshops to 600 regional participants who have produced over 140 short films. Each year between eight to nine tours take place.

Over five days, 12 participants are taught fundamental filmmaking skills in a hands-on style workshop, learning basic camera, sound and editing techniques and working in groups to create short dramas, documentaries and animations. While the Roadshow crew teach filmmaking skills, the films are created by the participants themselves, with stories ranging from traditional Dreamtime legends to music videos, comedies, dramas, news style segments and documentaries exploring community themes and traditional culture.

On the last day of the workshop, the films created during the course are screened to the wider community on a portable 3x4metre outdoor cinema screen.

The films made through this unique cultural program are a valuable record for each community and also serve to educate the wider community through broadcast on NITV and festival screenings.

- **Indigenous Community Stories**

The Indigenous Community Stories (ICS) Initiative is a digital multi media initiative with the goal of recording, preserving and digitally archiving 100 community stories from all regions of Western Australia, so that they can be viewed over the next 100 years and beyond.

This initiative will digitally record in high definition Indigenous heritage, culture and history for future generations as well as creating invaluable records of Australia's national cultural identity. There is a great urgency to record the stories, accomplishments and reflections of communities and senior Indigenous community members across Western Australia.

3. Multi-faceted operating structure at FTI

FTI is unique in its delivery of a wide range of services.

The operations are inter-linked, with the training, production support, facilities, screen culture and events arms of the operations flowing to all aspects of a production; from inception to marketing, and also the development of the practitioners who work on productions.

The structure has evolved over time, and it is ScreenWest's view that this structure operates at an efficient and effective level.

It is noted that the breadth of FTI's operations would be difficult to replicate outside of the not-for-profit sector to achieve the same level of overall outcomes for the screen industry.

Concluding Remarks

FTI is a vibrant organization that is an important player in the continued growth of the screen industry in Western Australia. The on-going support of Screen Australia to FTI is in our view critical to their future success.

ScreenWest notes that it seems that there may be a difference between the role played by FTI in Western Australia and the screen resource organizations in other states, and their relationship with their State funding agencies.

It is suggested Screen Australia may need to take into account State-based differences when looking at the overall findings of this review.

We look forward to discussing the operations of FTI with you further.



Ian Booth
Chief Executive