



Ruth Harley

**Australian International Documentary Conference,
Adelaide, South Australia**

Friday 26 February 2010

AV: Library Archive Reel

SLIDE: Screen Australia Logo

Good morning everyone.

The National Documentary Program represents 60 years of iconic cultural stories. The reel we've just seen represents 60 years storytelling that makes up the living museum that the Screen Australia Library houses. It can be readily accessed via free and paid licences for use of its archival material. There is information about the over 5000 strong catalogue of titles on the Screen Australia stand.

It's a nice reminder of the priceless value of what has been created by the documentary community and it continues to grow even as the landscape changes around us. And it certainly does change. Three big ones

1. Increased distribution opportunities for all kinds of content

- More free to air television channels

SLIDE: Free to Air Logos

- More subscription television channels

SLIDE: Subscription Television Channels

SLIDE: Screen Australia Logo

- The first stages of the Government's National Broadband Network begins to take shape with its early glimmer of new and faster content distribution pipes.

2. The continuing effects of the Global Financial Crisis on investment and distribution of all forms of content.

3. And while these great world changing events have been taking place, Screen Australia has been bedding down new policies, the Producer Offset, new organisational structures and building a new highly committed team to serve the production communities.

But what about for documentaries specifically – what’s been happening?

SLIDES: Stills of recent documentary productions

Well first and foremost – there has been some really outstanding work.

Three films deserve special mentions:

Bastardy won the Special Jury Prize at the Pacific International Documentary Festival this year, the Jury Prize for Best Documentary at the Film Critics Circle of Australia Awards and the Best Documentary Human Story at the ATOM Awards.

First Australians was a stand out. As well as being directed and produced by one of our board members, the formidable Rachel Perkins, it took home a swag of local awards as well as the Best TV Documentary UN Media Peace Awards.

Then there was *Glass*, nominated for an Emmy and a shortlisted nominee for last year’s Academy Awards. Not funded by Screen Australia but made in Australia and celebrated here. Terrific to see such an acclaimed feature filmmaker as Scott Hicks returning to documentary. And my Christmas gift to my music loving friends.

Today I want to talk about three subjects in particular

1. Screen Australia’s documentary programs
2. The Documentary Production Report and some preliminary offset analysis
3. An initial attempt to streamline process. All suggestions welcome on how to do more of this.

SLIDE: Screen Australia Logo

Section 1 – Screen Australia Documentary Programs

Firstly I'd like to share with you a few clips which showcase work from Screen Australia's documentary strands.

AV: Inside the Firestorm

SLIDE: Screen Australia Logo

This documentary made by the very talented team of Alex West, Lucy McLaren and Jacob Hickey from Renegade supported by the ABC. It played a couple of weeks ago on the anniversary of Black Saturday so many of you may have seen it.

The use of personal footage from those in the midst of this horror was so very compelling. This film was part of Screen Australia's National Documentary Program.

Next up: Domestic Door. We've been lucky enough to be given a clip to show you from Cordell Jigsaw's production *Three Boys Dreaming* which tells the stories of three young Aboriginal footballers over a two year period as they attempt to break into the AFL. Take a look:

AV: Three Boys Dreaming

SLIDE: Screen Australia Logo

Three Boys Dreaming. The work of Michael Cordell, Alan Collins and Stephen McGregor – again supported by the ABC and Screen Australia through our Domestic Docs Door. It is still being finished and will possibly receive a theatrical release later this year.

Next up is Prospero Productions' *Death of the Megabeasts* – funded through our International Door and with broadcaster support from SBS and the National Geographic Channel.

AV: Death of the Megabeasts

EP Punchard and Julia Redwood have created this potent mix of science and myth in an epic landscape – and very cute babies!

SLIDE: Screen Australia Logo

The last production I wanted to highlight is *Mother of Rock: The Lillian Roxon Story*. Its world premiere is at the Melbourne International Film Festival later this year and it will also broadcast on SBS. This is the life and times of an amazing Australian woman at a fascinating time in an incredible city told through interviews and her own correspondence.

AV: Mother of Rock: The Lillian Roxon Story

SLIDE: Screen Australia Logo

Robert de Young from Lowlands Media and Paul Clarke are responsible for that. Congratulations. Screen Australia funded this project again through our National Documentary Program.

SLIDE: Screen Australia Programs Slide

We have 6 funding strands for documentary programs including the jtv documentary fund which is a continuing joint initiative with the ABC [that was announced earlier this week]. And we also fund documentaries through our fantastic Indigenous Department. In addition there is support for documentary through our Enterprise Program [for example 50% of the companies we fund under this program have a documentary remit], documentary development funding and our marketing programs, including festival support. We also provide funding for the work of the Screen Resource Centres in each state.

I've mentioned a number of those programs in the context of the clips I've shown you all. I want to spend a little time talking about the National Documentary Program - NDP. It does have a special status.

NDP, formerly the National Interest Program, incorporates a 60-year heritage of excellence in filmmaking. It is the vehicle through which some of the highest rating and award winning Australian documentaries have been made, screened and collected by the Screen Australia Library. It is a specialist national documentary collection.

Within Screen Australia's Documentary Unit the NDP aims to create a comprehensive slate of projects over time, involving a diversity of practitioners, styles, formats and budgets. Projects are assessed and framed broadly around the four content areas of:

- Art and culture;

- Contemporary and social issues (including social history);
- Science and the environment; and
- National history and identity.

The NDP manages Making History (\$2.5m per year). In relationship with the ABC, Making History aims to create 10 hours of distinctive and significant history programs over the three years from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2011.

The NDP and Making History funds generate a cultural and social record of Australia via premium productions with higher budgets made by outstanding filmmakers. After screenings on Australian TV or going live on the web, original footage shot during the production of these projects is delivered to the Screen Australia Library and then reused by the documentary community. A virtuous circle.

So Screen Australia has a curatorial responsibility for this content. It's a task we take very seriously.

We value all our documentary programs but we feel an especially high level of accountability for NDP so I wanted to take the time to explain this.

Section 2 – Documentary Production Report

Next I want to talk to you about how documentary production is tracking.

SLIDE: Documentary Snapshot Cover

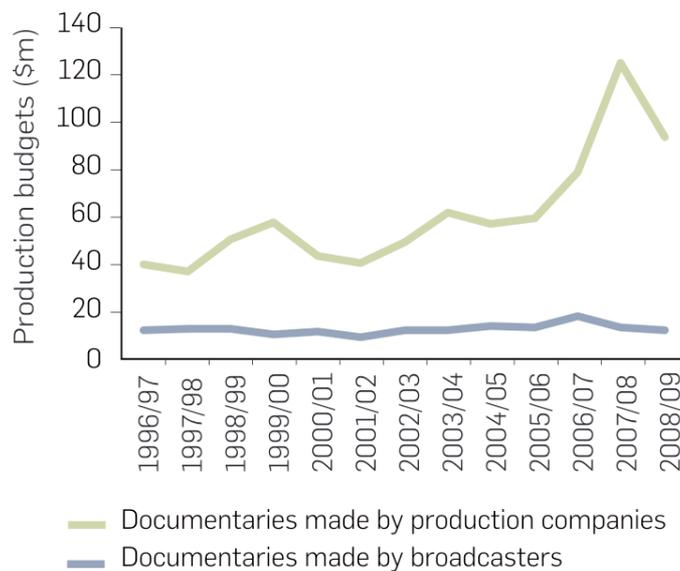
As a segue, our Marketing department have produced a great little reel and a brochure that all of you will have received. It is a snapshot of standout Australian documentaries – recent award winners or titles that have been selected at high-profile international festivals as well as some upcoming programs. Now these are not just Screen Australia titles but offer a broad collection of work that help us to promote all the great screen content that has been created. Let's take a look:

AV: Trailer

SLIDE: Documentary Report Cover

This year we have been able to bring our production statistics right up to 2008/09 as we had assistance from all of the free-to-air, as well as the subscription channels. Each provided information on all of the Australian documentaries they had financed over the last two financial years as well as titles broadcast in 2009.

SLIDE: Production is up



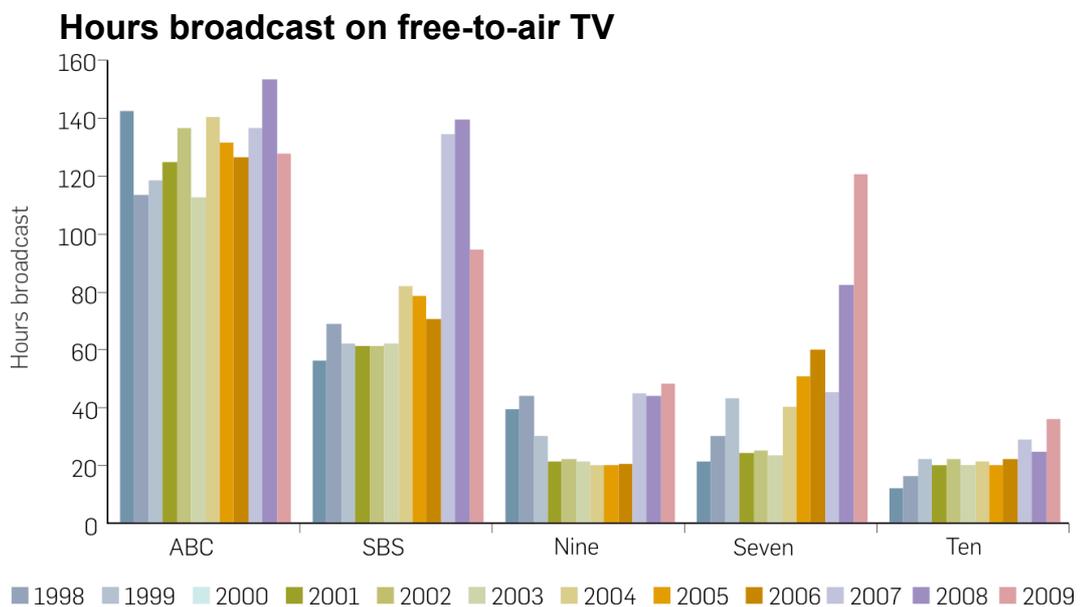
- Production peaked in 2007/08. A total of 509 hours (239 titles) were produced, with production budgets totalling \$138.6 million, compared to the 13 year average of 331 hours and \$74 million.
- Note the distinction between documentaries made by production companies and those made in-house by broadcasters.
- Activity by broadcasters refers to productions where television broadcasters are the ONLY production companies involved. Includes both free-to-air and subscription broadcasters. (But doesn't include subscription television channel content providers - these are included with production companies).
- Examples of in-house docos by broadcasters include *Border Security*, *RPA*, *Australian Story*. Also many one-off titles made by the ABC Indigenous Programs Unit for screening

on *Message Stick*, and by ABC TV Arts for screening on *Artscape*.

- Examples of docos by production companies include *Surf Patrol* (Cornerbox), *Bondi Rescue* (Cordell Jigsaw), *RSPCA Animal Rescue* (Seven and Imagination Television Ltd).

SLIDE: Why has production increased?

- All of the commercial free-to-air broadcasters are screening above the minimum 20 hours of first release Australian doco per year



- Seven has gone from 60 hours in 2006, to 83 in 2008 to 121 in 2009
- ASTRA are planning to release figures on Australian content on subscription TV at their conference in March, including specific documentary figures.

SLIDE: Ratings

- Seven is also topping the doco ratings. (Eight of the top 10 documentaries (from any country) in 2009 were Australian titles, and all in the top 10 were broadcast by Seven)

Top rating documentaries on Australian free-to-air TV, 2009 (Australian titles listed in bold)

Rank	Title	Network	Viewers ('000)
1	A Lion Called Christian	7	1,587
2	World's Strictest Parents	7	1,510
3	Border Security: Australia's Front Line	7	1,499
4	Miracle of the Hudson Plane Crash	7	1,490
5	Find My Family	7	1,488
6	Border Security: Australia's Front Line (Monday)	7	1,480
7	The Zoo	7	1,475
8	RSPCA Animal Rescue	7	1,433
9	Surf Patrol	7	1,415
10	Triple Zero Heroes	7	1,389

Source: OzTAM, compiled by Screen Australia. 5 city metro averages

- Audiences for top rating docos are comparable to those for top rating prime time drama

Top rating drama titles on Australian free-to-air TV, 2009 (Australian titles listed in bold)

Rank	Title	Network	Viewers ('000)
1	Packed to the Rafters	7	1,872
2	All Saints - The Finale	7	1,505
3	NCIS	10	1,450
4	Midsomer Murders - Sunday	ABC 1	1,421
5	Merlin	10	1,364
6	City Homicide - Monday	7	1,313
7	Flashforward	7	1,272
8	Midsomer Murders - Evening	ABC	1,254
9	Criminal Minds	7	1,251
10	New Tricks - Evening	ABC	1,221

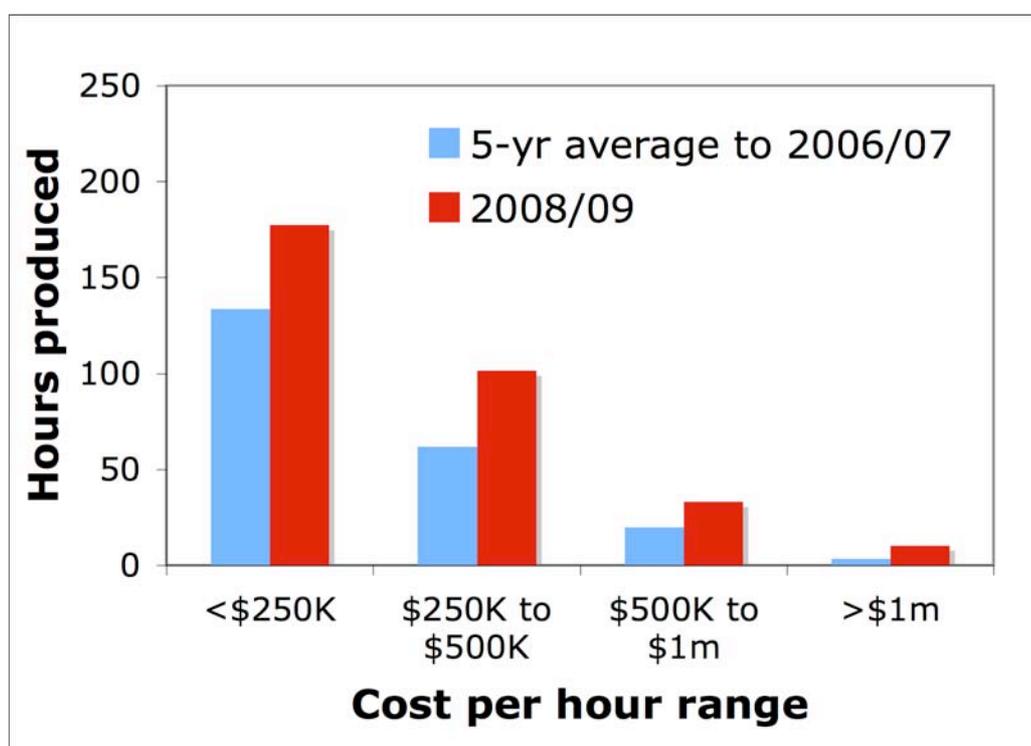
Source: OzTAM, compiled by Screen Australia. 5 city metro averages

Production of government-funded documentaries is up

- Production of titles financed by Screen Australia and its former agencies increased in 2007/08 and 2008/09.
- There was a surge in funding in the final years before the creation of Screen Australia as the 3 former agencies finished up.
- Much of this funding turned into production activity in 2007/08 and 2008/09.

SLIDE: Does the increase mean the Producer Offset is working for documentaries?

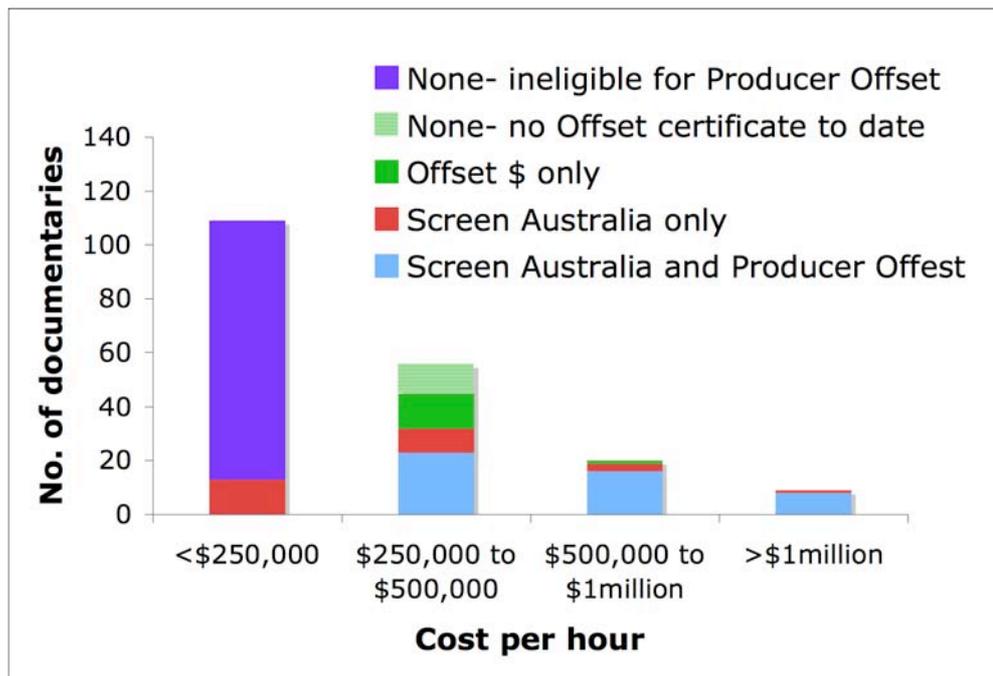
- Still early days but looks good



Source: Screen Australia

- Looking at 2008/09 slate (first year of full operation of the offset) compared to the 5-year average to 2006/07 (pre-offset), there have been increases in hours produced across all of the budget ranges, including under \$250K/hour, which is ineligible for the offset.

SLIDE: Federal funding to the 2008/09 slate



Source: Screen Australia

- 2008/09 is the first full year of simultaneous operation of Screen Australia and the Producer Offset.
- This is a snapshot of the number of documentaries starting production in 2008/09 broken down by cost per hour, indicating those with direct funding via Screen Australia and indirect funding via the Producer Offset.
- We've shown it by number of titles - if it's charted by hours of production the trend is very similar.
- It's inclusive of titles made in-house by broadcasters - many of the titles under \$250,000 per hour with no government funding are in-house documentaries.
- Titles with Screen Australia finance (with or without the offset) are present across all budget ranges.
- Offset finance without Screen Australia is predominantly in the \$250,000 to \$500,000 per hour category
- Note that due to tax secrecy, information about offset titles cannot be shared with Screen Australia's Research department. These figures have been compiled using information from both departments, without breaching confidentiality on individual titles.

SLIDE: Producer Offset

CERTIFICATES ISSUED FOR NON-FEATURE DOCUMENTARIES TO 18 FEBRUARY 2010

PROVISIONAL	
Number of certificates issued	153
Total budgets	\$138.53 million
FINAL	
Number of certificates issued	64
Total QAPE	\$48.72 million
Total Offset	\$9.74 million

Source: Screen Australia

- Since the introduction of the Producer Offset in July 2007, 64 final certificates have been issued to documentaries, which is a contribution of nearly \$10 million in the first 30 months of operation.
- Many more provisional certificates have been issued in this period (153), and we know that most docos with provisionals (85%) ultimately get made and get final certificates.
- That's good news. But we all know it not a perfect world.

SLIDE: Screen Australia Logo

Section 3 – Grant Model

The documentary community tells us that their engagement with Screen Australia can be a complicated experience for what can sometimes amount to small amounts of funding.

In response, I am pleased to announce today that for all documentary projects approved after 1 March 2010, Screen Australia funding of \$200,000 or under will be provided as a grant, rather than as recoupable investment, and will not have to be repaid unless the terms of the grant agreement are breached.

‘Screen Australia funding’ in this case means production finance through any of our documentary programs including jtv docs and programs funded by the Indigenous Department. If a project has received development funding from Screen Australia or its predecessor agencies, the development funds will be added to the production funds for the purpose of determining whether the \$200,000 grant threshold has been reached. [Support provided through Screen Australia’s marketing programs is not included.]

So what difference will it make? What will it mean for everyone?

All the normal requirements of each documentary funding program will still apply, including eligibility, marketplace attachments and delivery requirements.

However, where funding is provided as a grant it will mean:

- simpler contracting – the grant agreement is relatively simple, with less need for negotiation and fewer transaction documents; for example Screen Australia will not generally need a solicitor’s opinion on change of title, but will rely on warranties from the producer;
- reduced reporting, with the number of funding drawdowns and associated cost reports reduced to three stages – on execution of the grant agreement, at rough cut, and at delivery.
- reduced consultation with Screen Australia Investment/Development Managers.
- an improved recoupment position for the producer, with Screen Australia no longer an equity investor;

- Producers will be free to make arrangements with other parties. At any stage. That is the beauty of a grant model. But the SA contribution will be agreed upfront and not varied.

Screen Australia will hold 1% copyright in all projects where its investment is greater than \$100,000. The idea is to keep it simple. The session that follows this will involve my Screen Australia team in the form of Ross Matthews, Liz Stevens and Martien Coucke who will be able to offer some further insights into this if you want.

I hope this will greatly reduce the contracting burden both on producers and on the Screen Australia team. I am committed to reducing transaction costs to get the money on screen. All suggestions gratefully received.

Conclusions

Documentaries as a genre have been doing very well with audiences over the last few years – both in terms of ratings and by way of critical acclaim.

I want to thank you all for your continued creative endeavours and productions. It's certainly not taken for granted and we continue to appreciate working with the production community to deliver impressive, engaging works that provide a legacy of content for the nation and great audience engagement.

I want to finish today with a clip from the film *Salt* which we funded through our Special Documentary Fund – for productions that don't need to have broadcaster attachment. It has won numerous awards for Michael Angus and Murray Fredericks. I really love this film, so I want to give you a taste of it.

AV: Salt

SLIDE: Screen Australia Logo

END