

Friday, 14 November 2008

Screen Australia
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Sydney NSW 2001

Goalpost Pictures Response to Screen Australia Draft Guidelines

This submission is from Rosemary Blight, Ben Grant, Kylie du Fresne and Cass O'Connor of Goalpost Pictures. Goalpost Pictures is a majority Australian owned production company with an alliance with international sales company Goalpost Film in the UK.

Goalpost Pictures has previously responded to Screen Australia's Statement of Intent a ('SOI') and the points below should be seen as supporting that response. We are also a member of IPI and support their response to the guidelines. Our point of view is from a company that has successfully produced both feature films and television programming.

We have read the Screen Australia draft guidelines with interest and note that as promised in the statement of intent they are rigorous and bold in their desire to make changes to the way screen content is produced in this country.

We support the overall intent of the guidelines and offer the following comments.

- Peer Assessment
- Short Films
- Development – draft by draft funding
- The Enterprises

Peer Assessment

Goalpost believes that, in the short time before the Screen Australia Board adopts these matters as guidelines, Screen Australia must be rigorous and transparent in devising what is to be 'devolved' and what is to be 'assessed' by whom. We ask that Screen Australia clearly define what is an industry specialist and assure that a peer is someone, who has the same or greater appropriate experience as the applicant. We would suggest that the selective inclusion of an international specialist onto peer assessment panels would benefit the industry.

Further, we would also encourage rigorous discussion of how cultural merit is to be assessed. Goalpost envisages a partnership between public and private sectors with experienced, talented producers, writers and directors participating alongside Screen Australia, State agencies and relevant outsiders in this discussion.

Short Films

We acknowledge that Screen Australia cannot take on every role, however we do feel that short films provide invaluable experience for producing, directing and writing talent. We support Screen Australia's commitment to support existing short film schemes throughout the country. For example the NSWFTO Emerging Film Maker Scheme, Open Channel in Melbourne and the MRC in Adelaide.

We also believe there could be a real appeal for Enterprises, especially ones from emerging producer teams, to do series of short films. Not only would this assure that new creative talent has a chance to be nurtured it also gives genuine experience to producer, director and writer teams in working together. It would also provide emerging producers the opportunity to control financing, producing, packaging and distribution of these films. They would also have the invaluable experience of operating a company that has continuous production slate. We would encourage that these Enterprises have both creative and company operation mentors.

Development – Draft by Draft Funding

We recognise that the eligibility criteria for single draft funding is a contentious issue. We support the eligibility criteria being raised but not at the expense of director and writers who have demonstrated excellence or merit. We suggest that eligibility should be based on a level playing field for writers, directors and producers based on merit, although we encourage Screen Australia to assure that for repeat draft funding is specifically for projects has with teams that can demonstrate a rigorous development path and defined financing plan.

The Enterprises

We continue to be supportive of the concept of production company enterprises. They will provide companies with the freedom to strategise development of projects, talent and the company goals as a whole.

We believe that these enterprises will have a big responsibility for the renewal of talent. The renewal of producer, writer and director talent is vital for this industry to grow and to excite and inspire. The industry cannot assume that the production companies will take on this role. Screen Australia should consider a match funding or other incentive schemes to give emerging producer and other talent the opportunity to work in operating production companies.

Screen Australia should look at diverse range of enterprises including ones from emerging teams.

In Summary, Goalpost Pictures is very supportive of Screen Australia providing strong leadership by devolving back to the industry the responsibility for the industry's own development and growth through a process that is rigorous, transparent and has an acute awareness for the importance of talent development.

We look forward to reading the next stage of Screen Australia's industry consultation, especially in the area of marketing.

Thank you for inviting our input.

Kind regards,

Rosemary Blight
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Ben Grant
Cass O'Connor