

## **Comment on Screen Australia draft program guidelines from Pablo Carrera**

Dear all,

My name is Pablo Carrera and I work as production finance executive for Future Films in the UK. We have been looking at creating bridges and business between UK and Australia, so we are in some sense very interested about these guidelines.

I have found the overall picture of the guidelines constructive and beneficial. My comments are mainly focused on the feature film-related funding, since that is what we do.

A couple of general comments:

- About the procedure itself: it's important to state the minimum requirements for monitoring the funds granted through the period they have been committed, mainly regarding the Development funding. It is also important to state the paperwork that will have to be shown to SA at the end of the granted period (reports, audited costs, etc.)
- There should be a paragraph stating (as in similar funds from other countries) what is the budget allocated for each programme (maximum funds available per year) and how it is financed (SA budget, Federal Budget, specific tax, etc.). This will give an idea to potential applicants of what they can expect.

Regarding the Development Programmes:

- The Enterprise Programme should also apply to distributors and exhibitors (not just to producers). Both are key players in the cycle of a film and in the end all parties are interdependent, thus all should be supported.
- Beyond this consideration, the 'new business partnerships and alliances' that are encouraged by this programme could also include integrations between Producers/Sales Agents/Distributors/Exhibitors. This would help to reach the wider dimension that is aimed in these guidelines.
- Among the assessment criteria for the slate of projects, 'creativity' is specifically excluded. It is a cornerstone together with the experienced team or the finance viability to consider the quality of a project; and it can be assessed in an early stage too.
- Given that emerging writers and filmmakers are obliged to apply for project development under the umbrella of an experienced producer, then activities to create bridges/network should be firmly supported: forums, conferences, round tables, workshops. These shouldn't be left to private and expensive initiatives. And the exchange must be constant. The guidelines encourage mentorships, traineeships, etc. but it's been demonstrated that real commitment (like grants or a specific trainee programmes) can be more effective.

Regarding the Production Financing, my sole comments have to do with the specific regulations for 'Feature Co-productions':

- The draft states that SA will exercise its discretion in the financing of co-productions having regard (among others) to the overall level of Australian content of the project. However, for the purposes of the Australian co-production treaties and MOU, any project that is considered an Australian film is entitled to enjoy all the benefits accorded to national films. The 'Australian content' shouldn't be then considered once again in order to allocate Production Finance; in the same way that the Producer Offset doesn't require co-production projects to have a minimum of SAC to be eligible. This is one of the reasons for the co-production treaties.

- The same applies to the rest of the criteria SA states in its decision to invest in co-productions: the participation of Australian in creative roles, whether the project has been originated in Australia or not and where it is to be shot; all of them are regulated in the co-production treaties and thus, if a co-production is accepted, projects should be eligible for the Production Finance under the same terms as any other Australian production, i.e. audience, creativity, commercial potentials, etc.

I have seen that the Screen Australia's Terms of Trade referred in the guidelines are not available yet, so I'm just dropping some elements I assume should be included in general for all the Programmes:

- SA investment recoupment (or its minimums and maximums)
- What SA intends to keep in terms of copyright and/or back-end in exchange of its investment
- Payment procedures and timing
- Guarantee (if any) required

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