

Screen Australia announces \$2.5 million of production funding for 12 documentaries

Wednesday 9 December 2020: Screen Australia has announced over \$2.5 million of funding for five documentaries through the Commissioned program and six through the Producer program. One documentary, *Incarceration Nation*, has received funding through the Indigenous Department.

The projects also include Tim Winton exploring the brilliant Western Australian reef in television series *Ningaloo*; a feature documentary about award-winning musician Courtney Barnett called *Anonymous Club*; and *Rebuilding Mallacoota*, a series delving into the bushfire recovery in coastal Victoria.

Screen Australia's Head of Documentary, **Bernadine Lim** said, "Documentaries offer a unique opportunity to hold a mirror up to ourselves and reflect, understand and question. As we come to the end of 2020, a challenging year for so many, it's clear that these compelling documentaries will shine a light on the important issues facing Australians including mental health, the impact of the devastating bushfires and the environment more broadly."

Screen Australia's Head of Indigenous, **Penny Smallacombe** said, "2020 saw the Black Lives Matter global movement unfold, and here at home the widespread support for Indigenous Lives Matter illustrated the ongoing injustices faced by Indigenous people with regards to the exceptionally high rates of incarceration in Australia, and the devastating Black Deaths in custody that have continued long after the Royal Commission in the 1980s. *Incarceration Nation* will be vital viewing for all Australian audiences."

Screen Australia consulted widely and recently created new documentary guidelines, but due to COVID-19's disruption it was decided it would be unhelpful to add any further change to the sector and introduce these at this time. Whilst the industry continues to adapt to COVID-19, the existing programs will remain for the rest of the 2020/21 financial year including PEP.

Project funded through the Indigenous Department:

- ***Incarceration Nation*:** A feature-length documentary for NITV which will tell the tragic story of the systemic injustice and oppression of Aboriginal people in their own lands at the hands of the Australian justice system. It will show the first-hand devastation, introduce the people trying to make a difference, and feature perspectives from academics, lawyers and people working to get this issue to the top of the national agenda. Writer/director Dean Gibson is joined by producer Helen Morrison, who previously collaborated on [Wik vs Queensland](#). This project is financed with support from NITV, Screen Queensland, The Post Lounge and Documentary Australia Foundation.

The Indigenous Department production funding blocklines are available [here](#).

Projects funded through the Documentary Commissioned program:

- ***Australia vs Anxiety*:** A one-hour documentary for SBS' Australia Uncovered strand presented by comedian Celia Pacquola who, having experienced anxiety herself, will go on a mission to find out how anxiety is affecting Australians. Pacquola will meet those suffering from the condition, those on the road to recovery and those who are helping with the journey. This project is directed by Sally Aitken ([The Pool](#)) and executive produced by Dan Brown and Jacqueline Willinge, whose credits include [Is Australia Sexist?](#). *Australia vs Anxiety* is supported by Screenwest and Lotterywest.
- ***Can Science Prevent Suicide?*:** A one-hour documentary for SBS' Australia Uncovered strand which will examine how new science, innovative thinking and technology is helping prevent suicide. The program will investigate why suicide is happening and reveal what is being done across the country to try and solve the problem. The documentary was developed by executive producer/writer Paul Scott, and sees writer/director/executive producer Jodi Boylan working alongside Lune Media co-executive producers David Galloway and Leonie Lowe, who together collaborated on [War on Waste](#) and [Fight for Planet A](#). The project is financed with support from Screen NSW.



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- **Ningaloo:** A three-part series for the ABC about the incredible Ningaloo Reef, Cape Range and Exmouth Gulf in Western Australia, written and presented by award-winning Australian author Tim Winton. The documentary will reveal how this pristine natural environment - a haven for unique and endangered species - can enrich all of humanity. Winton is joined by director/co-writer Peter Rees ([Mythbusters](#)) and executive producer Celia Tait ([Storm in a Teacup](#)). This project has received major production investment from the Western Australian Screen Fund through the State Government of Western Australia's Royalties for Regions Program and is financed with support from Screenwest and Lotterywest and the ABC.
- **Our African Roots:** A one-hour documentary for SBS' Australia Uncovered strand shining a light on Australia's forgotten African history. Presented by writer and filmmaker Santilla Chingaipe ([Third Culture Kids](#)), this project will reveal the central role that people of African ancestry played in events that shaped modern Australia - from the First Fleet to the Eureka Rebellion and beyond. The creative team features writer/producer Chingaipe, director/producer Tony Jackson ([Aftermath: Beyond Black Saturday](#)) and writer/executive producer David Collins ([You See Monsters](#)). A Chemical Media Production, *Our African Roots* is developed and produced with support from Film Victoria and with philanthropy via Documentary Australia Foundation.
- **Rebuilding Mallacoota:** A three-part series for the ABC about the recovery effort in the bushfire-ravaged Victorian coastal community of Mallacoota, from the team behind [Aftermath: Beyond Black Saturday](#). The documentary will shine a light on the determined band of citizens who are striving to overcome their differences to save their town and rebuild. This project is written by David Collins ([You See Monsters](#)), directed by Tony Jackson and produced by Joe Connor, Lucy Maclaren and Ken Connor ([Aftermath: Beyond Black Saturday](#)). *Rebuilding Mallacoota* is developed and produced with support from Film Victoria and filmed on location with support from Film Victoria's Regional Location Assistance Fund.

Projects funded through the Documentary Producer program:

- **Anonymous Club:** A feature documentary about acclaimed Australian singer-songwriter Courtney Barnett. Exploring the inner life of the notoriously shy artist amidst her significant rise to fame, this documentary is written and directed by Danny Cohen, award-winning director who has collaborated with Barnett on music video clips including [Everybody Here Hates You](#). The film is produced by Philippa Campey ([Brazen Hussies](#)) and Samantha Dinning ([No Time For Quiet](#)) and will be distributed by Film Art Media.
- **Beyond the Stars:** A virtual reality documentary about one of the world's greatest scientific endeavours, the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) telescope to be built in Western Australia. Guided by scientists and ancient astronomers, the documentary will take viewers onto the observatory site and into the Universe in 360°. Writer/director Briege Whitehead ([The Antarctica Experience](#)) teams up with producer Jess Black ([Innocent Behind Bars](#)). *Beyond the Stars* is financed with support from Screenwest and Lotterywest, Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, the International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research and Australia's national science agency CSIRO.
- **Black Summer:** An online documentary about Australia's Black Summer bushfires through the first-hand account of photographer Matthew Abbott, whose photos propelled the Australian bushfires to the top of the global news cycle. The creative team features writer, director and producer Chris Phillips ([Lost Rambos](#)) and producer Katy Roberts ([Australiana](#)). This project is supported by the Judith Neilson Institute for Journalism and Ideas.
- **Cleaning Trauma:** A feature documentary which follows the journey of larger-than-life trauma cleaning business owner Sandra Pankhurst, as she begins a search for her birth mother and reinvents herself as an icon for resilience. The film offers insights into the trauma cleaning business and its motley crew of workers as they tackle crime scenes, squatter settlements and clean the homes of society's most vulnerable. Written and directed by Lachlan McLeod ([Big in Japan](#)), *Cleaning Trauma*

Media enquiries: Lidia Williams
+61 2 8113 1091 | +61 468 784 170 | lidia.williams@screenaustralia.gov.au
www.screenaustralia.gov.au



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is produced by Charlotte Wheaton ([Bodyline: The Ultimate Test](#)) and David Elliot-Jones ([Big in Japan](#)), and executive produced by Good Thing Productions' Virginia Whitwell and Nick Batzias whose credits include [The Australian Dream](#). This project was developed with support from Film Victoria.

- **The Front:** A feature documentary about Australia's most devastating bushfire season in 2019-20, bringing together user-generated first hand footage with news coverage to deliver a powerful insight into a disaster that captivated the world. The creative team features award-winning writer/director Eddie Martin and producers Anna McLeish and Sarah Shaw from Carver Films who previously collaborated on [Have You Seen The Listers?](#), and producers Katy Roberts ([Australiana](#)) and Katia Nizic ([Paper Trails](#)). *The Front* is financed with support from Gunpowder and Sky, Film Victoria, Soundfirm and Umbrella Entertainment.
- **The Village:** A one-hour documentary from Roar Film about a radical new aged care development in Hobart which combines the best dementia care practices from around the planet with some revolutionary ideas, focusing on the individual and their life experiences as the basis for future care. Following the recent collaboration on [Looky Looky Here Comes Cooky](#), this project is executive produced by Craig Dow Sainter, produced by Kath Symmons and is written and produced by Steve Thomas. They are joined by writer/producer Martine Delaney, director Eliya Cohen and impact producer Felicity Blake. *The Village* is developed with support from Screen Tasmania with philanthropy via Documentary Australia Foundation.

The full list of documentary blocklines is available [here](#).

The latest projects funded for documentary development are available [here](#).

ABOUT SCREEN AUSTRALIA'S DOCUMENTARY FUNDING

The [Documentary Producer program](#) is designed to give producers the foundational funding required to leverage their projects creatively and commercially. It must have a clear path to audience but marketplace attachment is not required at the application stage.

The [Documentary Commissioned program](#) is designed to support the production of a diverse range of quality projects for television broadcast, SVOD or similar. It must offer a compelling vision with a clear and enduring cultural value, and have a local presale with a minimum license fee at application stage.

The [Documentary Development program](#) aims to assist documentary makers in achieving planned outcomes for the development of their projects.

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Media enquiries: Lidia Williams
+61 2 8113 1091 | +61 468 784 170 | lidia.williams@screenaustralia.gov.au
www.screenaustralia.gov.au



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