

National Cultural Policy Submission

1469430

Public

Individual

Nicholas Verso



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

My name is Nicholas Verso - an Australian writer, director and producer working across film and television. My work includes the AACTA Award-winning short film *The Last Time I Saw Richard*, the Venice-premiering feature *Boys in the Trees*, the Logie-winning series *Crazy Fun Park*, and most recently the Stan Original series *Invisible Boys*, nominated for a Peabody Award. I have worked directly in youth-oriented storytelling and have seen firsthand both the appetite for Australian stories and the growing challenge of connecting them meaningfully with younger audiences.

One of the most urgent issues facing the Australian screen sector is audience renewal. If the next National Cultural Policy is serious about a sustainable cultural future, it must address the weakening relationship between Australian screen content and audiences under 30.

The challenge is no longer simply one of production. Australia continues to produce excellent work, but too often younger audiences do not encounter it in ways that feel culturally central, socially alive or designed for how they actually discover and consume screen stories. This is not just a marketing issue. It is an industry sustainability issue. If younger Australians do not build lasting habits around local content, the sector will become increasingly dependent on an ageing audience that is not being replaced.

This matters creatively, culturally and economically. Without younger audiences, Australian stories lose cultural relevance, broadcasters lose long-term audience strength, streamers treat local content as compliance rather than opportunity, and independent producers face a weaker future for local IP. Over time, this risks hollowing out the sector so that Australia remains a place where production happens, but not necessarily a place where Australian stories remain central to national life.

I would like to see the new National Cultural Policy respond to this in clear and practical ways:

First, create a dedicated Youth Audience Screen Fund across Screen Australia, ABC and SBS for audiences aged roughly 15 to 30. This fund should support scripted, factual and digital-first projects designed specifically for younger audiences, with ringfenced money for discoverability and audience activation. Habit formation is key.

Second, require publicly supported screen projects aimed at younger audiences to include a Youth Audience Plan at greenlight stage. This should cover platform strategy, social rollout and community engagement, not just the program itself. Discoverability should be treated as part of the work, not an afterthought.

Third, give ABC iView and SBS On Demand a specific youth engagement mandate with measurable targets. These services are important national cultural platforms, but they need long-term support to become places where younger Australians actively discover and engage with Australian stories, cultivating the audiences of tomorrow.

Fourth, the new streaming content framework should be used to support genuine audience-building, not merely compliance. Major streaming services are now subject to a new Australian screen content requirement, and part of that investment should go towards projects that engage younger Australians and help build the next generation of local screen audiences.

The next National Cultural Policy should not just ask how Australian work is made but who it is being made for and whether it is building the audiences that will sustain the sector into the future.