

Introduction

I am an independent writer and producer working across film and television, currently in my thirties, with more than eight years of experience in the Australian screen industry.

My experience within the sector has been mixed. I have been fortunate to receive grants, development opportunities and professional support that have allowed me to build a career in storytelling and creative production. At the same time, I have consistently experienced financial instability, limited pathways for sustainable career progression, and what often feels like a glass ceiling within the industry.

These experiences have given me a strong appreciation for both the value of Australia's cultural investment and the structural challenges facing emerging and mid-career creatives trying to build long-term careers locally.

I believe Australia has extraordinary creative talent and stories worth championing, but the industry requires stronger structural support to ensure fair competition, equitable access and long-term sustainability. I want to see an Australian screen industry where creatives are not simply surviving project to project, but are able to thrive within a healthy, confident and globally recognised cultural sector.

Supporting Australian Film Through Fairer Exhibition and Distribution

Australian films face structural disadvantages in their own domestic market. They are competing for audience attention against Hollywood studios with vastly larger marketing budgets, global distribution power, franchise recognition and control over premium cinema release windows.

At the same time, cinema attendance overall is declining, which means Australian films are also competing against a shrinking share of audience attention overall. This creates a market dynamic where films struggle to build audience awareness before they disappear from cinemas.

Cultural policy should recognise that this is **not** a purely free or equal market. If Australia values its own stories, voices and creative industries, policy settings should help create fairer conditions for local productions to reach audiences.

Possible measures could include:

- reserving some premium cinema release windows or school holiday periods for Australian productions
- introducing minimum Australian content exhibition quotas for cinema chains
- guaranteeing minimum theatrical runs for qualifying Australian films
- incentivising cinemas that actively support local content and regional storytelling.

These approaches are not unprecedented internationally. South Korea has long maintained screen quota laws requiring cinemas to show Korean films for a minimum number of days each year. This policy is widely credited as one contributing factor in the growth and resilience of the Korean film industry, which now competes globally while maintaining strong domestic audience support.

France, Brazil, Spain and other countries have also implemented forms of screen quotas or cultural protections to preserve domestic cultural production against overwhelming foreign market dominance.

Australia should consider similar measures not as protectionism for its own sake, but as a way to ensure Australian audiences continue to have meaningful access to Australian stories in Australian cinemas.

Recognising Cinemas as Essential Cultural Infrastructure

Australia's cultural infrastructure should explicitly include cinemas alongside libraries, museums, galleries, theatres, community halls and other public cultural spaces.

Cinemas are often treated purely as commercial enterprises, but they also serve an important cultural and civic role. They are places where communities gather, where stories are shared collectively, and where audiences engage with culture outside increasingly isolated and algorithm-driven online environments.

Like libraries or galleries, cinemas create access to cultural participation. They help shape how Australians see themselves, understand each other, and connect with local stories and experiences.

However, access to cinemas is uneven across Australia. Many outer suburban, regional and lower-income communities have limited or no access to diverse screen culture, independent cinema or Australian film. At the same time, rising ticket prices are creating additional barriers to participation.

A future National Cultural Policy could recognise cinemas as part of Australia's cultural infrastructure and support them accordingly.

This could include:

- integrating cinemas into cultural and urban planning frameworks
- ensuring cinemas are accessible via public transport and distributed equitably relative to population growth
- supporting community-owned, council-supported or state-supported cinemas
- subsidising ticket prices for Australian films, educational screenings or community programming
- creating dedicated pathways for emerging Australian filmmakers to self-distribute and screen their work affordably
- supporting regional and suburban cinema access, not only inner-city cultural precincts.

Public or supported cinemas would not necessarily need to operate at a loss. Like many cultural institutions, they could combine commercial and cultural functions sustainably.

These venues could:

- screen mainstream new releases
- showcase Australian and First Nations films
- host festivals and retrospectives
- provide educational screenings for schools and universities
- support local creative communities
- create exhibition opportunities for emerging filmmakers
- foster community participation through curated programs and events.

Importantly, this approach would recognise that cultural access is not only about producing Australian stories, but ensuring Australians can actually encounter them in shared public spaces.

Establishing an International Australian Film Festival and Cultural Export Program

Australia should establish a federally supported international Australian Film Festival program that actively promotes Australian screen culture overseas.

Australian film and television are cultural assets as well as creative products. They shape how Australia is understood internationally, strengthen cultural relationships, and create long-term economic and tourism opportunities.

While Australian stories are highly regarded globally, international awareness of Australian cinema remains inconsistent and often dependent on isolated breakout successes. A coordinated international strategy could help build stronger long-term recognition of Australian screen culture, creative talent and national identity.

A travelling Australian Film Festival could operate across key international markets including:

- Europe
- North America
- East and Southeast Asia
- the United Kingdom
- emerging international creative hubs.

The program could:

- showcase contemporary Australian films, documentaries, animation and digital storytelling
- highlight First Nations storytelling and emerging Australian creatives
- support industry networking and international distribution opportunities
- engage Australian expatriate communities abroad
- build stronger audience familiarity with Australian stories and performers over time.

Importantly, this initiative should not be viewed solely as arts funding, but as cultural diplomacy and export development.

Countries such as South Korea, France and Japan have demonstrated that sustained international cultural promotion strengthens both economic exports and national brand recognition. Global familiarity with Korean film, television and music, for example, has significantly increased international tourism, investment and engagement with Korean culture more broadly.

Australia has the opportunity to strengthen its own cultural presence internationally by treating creative works as strategic national exports.

A federally supported international festival program could also:

- encourage international co-productions and partnerships
- support Australian distribution into overseas markets
- strengthen Australia's reputation as a creative nation
- increase tourism interest through cultural exposure
- create pathways for Australian creatives to access larger global audiences.

Over time, greater international visibility of Australian storytelling could also positively reinforce domestic cultural confidence, helping Australian audiences recognise local film and television as valuable cultural products rather than secondary alternatives to overseas content.

Transparency and Disclosure Standards for AI Use in Creative Works

As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly integrated into creative industries, Australia should establish clear national disclosure standards for AI-generated or AI-assisted creative works.

Research consistently suggests that audiences value human-made creative work differently from machine-generated work. However, consumers are often unable to distinguish between fully human-created content and content generated or substantially assisted by AI systems.

Without transparency, audiences cannot make informed cultural or ethical choices about the media they consume.

A future National Cultural Policy should recognise transparency in creative production as an important principle for maintaining trust, protecting creative labour and preserving the value of human artistic practice.

This does not require banning AI tools or preventing innovation. AI technologies will likely continue to play a role across many creative industries. However, audiences should have the right to know when AI has been used in the creation of artistic works.

Possible measures could include:

- mandatory disclosure of AI-generated or AI-assisted content in film, television, music, publishing and visual arts
- on-screen disclosure requirements for screen media
- standardised labelling systems for AI-generated creative works
- transparency obligations for commercial distributors and platforms
- clear definitions distinguishing fully generated, partially assisted and minimally assisted works.

As AI-generated media becomes more widespread and increasingly difficult to identify, Australia has an opportunity to establish globally relevant standards for transparency and ethical creative practice.

Australia already recognises the value of transparency and origin labelling through frameworks such as the Australian Made certification system, introduced nationally in 1986. The enduring success of

the Australian Made logo demonstrates that consumers value clear disclosure about the origins and production of the goods they purchase.

Similar disclosure standards for AI-generated creative works would not prohibit innovation, but would provide audiences with transparency about authorship and production methods, enabling more informed cultural and ethical choices.

In Conclusion

In developing the next National Cultural Policy, Australia has an opportunity not only to support the arts, but to rethink how culture is valued, accessed and sustained in a rapidly changing world.

Australian stories matter. They help define who we are, strengthen social connection, and shape how Australia is understood both domestically and internationally. However, for Australian culture to genuinely thrive, policy must go beyond production alone and address the broader systems that determine visibility, access, sustainability and public trust.

The recommendations outlined in this submission are grounded in a desire for a stronger, fairer and more resilient screen industry — one where Australian creatives can build sustainable careers, audiences can meaningfully engage with local stories, and Australian culture is treated as an essential part of national life rather than a secondary commercial concern.

I believe Australia has the creative talent, cultural diversity and global potential to become a far more confident and internationally recognised creative nation. With thoughtful policy settings and long-term investment, the next National Cultural Policy can help ensure Australian storytelling not only survives, but thrives for generations to come.