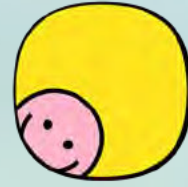


# Towards a new National Cultural Policy with children and young people at the centre.

Submission: 22 May 2026



Australian  
Children's  
Television  
Foundation



### A Place For Every Story

Cover and above – Key art and episodic still from *Tales From Outer Suburbia*, an Australian series from the imagination of Shaun Tan. Exploring childhood, belonging, curiosity and the quiet magic hidden within everyday suburban life.

## Executive Summary

Children and young people make up nearly a third of Australia’s population. They are at the most formative stages of their lives: developing identity, values, skills and habits that will shape not only their futures but the future of our culture. A National Cultural Policy that fails to place children and young people at its heart risks undermining its own long term goals.

Children and young people are not a single cohort. They comprise distinct age groups – early childhood, adolescence and early adulthood – with different needs, barriers and opportunities for engagement with the arts and culture. Too often, arts and screen content for children have been treated as peripheral – an “add on” or lower-value category – rather than as essential cultural infrastructure.

At the same time, childhood itself has changed. Online platforms, video on demand and algorithmically promoted content have transformed how children experience stories, culture and each other. Shared cultural moments are increasingly replaced by highly individualised, commercially optimised content ecosystems that prioritise watch time and addictive content. The social, emotional and educational consequences of this shift have become impossible to ignore.

A National Cultural Policy must respond by actively supporting children and young people’s developing identities, social connections, creativity, literacy and sense of belonging.

Screen content is one of the most powerful cultural touchpoints in children’s lives. When Australian children see their lives reflected on screen, they experience recognition, affirmation and possibility.

Australia has a proud legacy of world class children’s television, built through a deliberate mix of public funding, regulation and institutional support. That framework, designed for a broadcast era, has collapsed in a fragmented, global, on demand market. There are now no meaningful obligations on broadcasters or streaming platforms to commission Australian children’s content. Production costs have risen sharply, but licence fees have not. Children’s content is now the most endangered screen genre globally.

In this context, the Australian Children’s Television Foundation (ACTF) has become a critical stabilising force – investing in development and production, brokering partnerships with public broadcasters and streaming platforms, supporting digital first content, and ensuring Australian children’s stories remain visible, viable and valuable. Demand for this support continues to grow while systemic funding gaps widen.

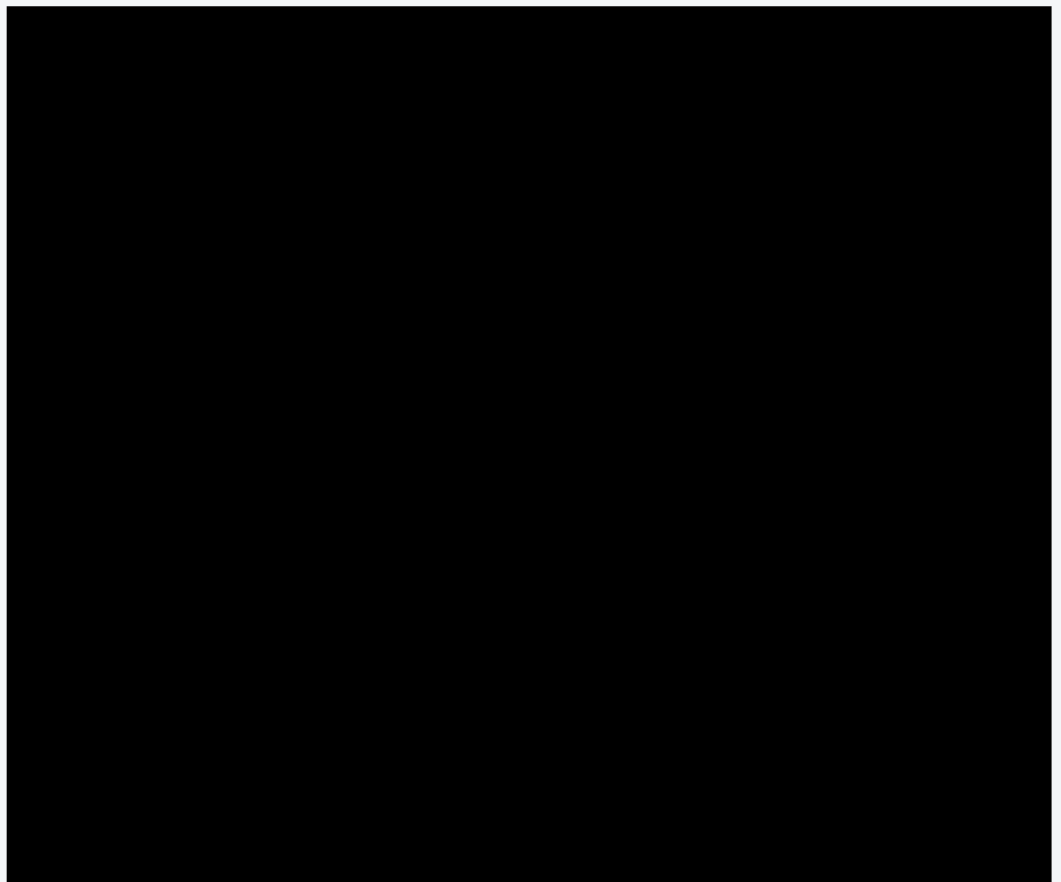
Australian children’s screen content delivers exceptional public value. It supports mental health and wellbeing, strengthens social cohesion, builds media literacy, enriches education, develops workforce skills and sustains a pipeline of creative talent and jobs across the screen sector.

The National Cultural Policy presents a clear opportunity: to recognise children and young people as a central cultural audience, to treat children’s screen content as essential cultural infrastructure, and to apply coordinated policy levers – across funding, regulation, discoverability and tax settings – to secure its future.

### **A Place For Every Story**

*“Windcatcher is rooted in the Indigenous experience of growing up in Australia, offering an important and much needed First Nations perspective and packaged as a quirky, nostalgic movie all families will enjoy.”*

Tara Watson, Mamamia  
26 March 2024



# Putting Children and Young People at the Centre of the National Cultural Policy

Children and young people are the most important demographic for a National Cultural Policy to address, and the value proposition of investing in the Arts for them is immense. The only way to a truly inclusive, diverse, fully engaged, and creative society is to develop both skills and appreciation for the Arts in young people. If culture is not shared with children and young people, it won't survive. We rely on each generation to embrace, respond and carry it forward.

There are more than 8 million people under 25 in Australia, representing a third of our population. They are brimming with energy and ideas, their brains are developing at the fastest rate they ever will, their identities are evolving, and the experiences and opportunities they have at a young age will form lifelong skills, habits and interests.

The National Cultural Policy should identify three age groups as comprising the definition of children and young people, each equally important, with their own distinct needs:

- Children 0 – 12 years
- Young people 13 – 17 years
- Young people 18 – 24 years

Children and young people have unique needs that present barriers to access and participation in the Arts by virtue of their stage in life. These include limited individual agency, the duty of care required to ensure children's safety, and a lack of economic and social independence. Furthermore, investment in the Arts for children and young people is underfunded or given "second best" treatment compared to art, screen, theatre, music, dance, and exhibitions created and developed for adult audiences.

The National Cultural Policy should flip the existing narrative on its head, so that children and young people are no longer seen as an "extra" to a theatre or dance program, a playroom at the back of a museum, or a screen "genre" that broadcasters pay less for.

Today's children and young people are test subjects for what Jonathan Haidt has called "the great rewiring of childhood". Online interaction and video-on-demand have radically shifted the way we engage with each other, experience culture and consume content. In his book, *The Anxious Generation*, Haidt writes that "By designing a firehose of addictive content that entered through kids' eyes and ears, and by displacing physical play and in-person socializing, these companies have rewired childhood and changed human development on an almost unimaginable scale." Haidt's work on this theme, alongside the devastating impact of cyberbullying on Australian teenagers, influenced Australia's decision to restrict access to social media platforms for Australians under 16.

The profound shift in how media is experienced – from shared cultural moments that brought us together to highly personalised, algorithmically delivered content – is challenging social cohesion and undermining communal values. Haidt argues for restrictions on social media and smartphones for children, to be replaced by “more independence, free play, and responsibility in the real world.” But how do we nurture the potential in all our children and encourage them to participate in the “real world”?

This is the role of a National Cultural Policy which supports children’s and young people’s:

- Developing identities;
- Connection to peers;
- Shared cultural moments;
- Modern Australian values; and
- Creativity, imagination, literacy, skills and talents.

***“When you share a story, you’re giving a child a hug that will last the rest of their lives.”***

- Frank Cottrell-Boyce, Children’s Laureate UK, novelist and screenwriter

Children arrive in the world wired to fall in love with stories – in books, on screen, and on stage. They love to dance, make music, and make art. This innate creativity must be encouraged and nurtured, and as they grow, children should be provided with opportunities to immerse themselves in exhibitions and festivals, play around with digital storytelling and filmmaking, and acquire the critical skills necessary to interpret, enjoy, and master art forms.

A focus on children and young people in the National Cultural Policy will create more opportunities for all children and young people to experience the Arts, leading to:

- Better mental health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people;
- Better social cohesion outcomes for communities;
- Development of the necessary skills for the future workforce; and
- Ensuring the future of the Australian arts and culture sector.

The capacity of children and young people to watch, find, and participate in the creation of Australian children’s screen content is vitally important to these outcomes.

The National Cultural Policy must be designed with children and young people at its heart.

# A National Cultural Policy Supporting Screen Stories For Australian Children

*“Children’s television is full of moments that capture the essence of civic life: negotiating rules, speaking up for fairness, resolving conflict, welcoming diversity and taking action for a cause. These real, relatable entry points help children see civics as something they live every day.”*

- Dr Keith Heggart, University of Technology Sydney, 2026

## Why It Matters

### Australian Children and Their Families Deserve Quality Content Made For Children

Children are inundated with screens during their formative years, right when they are developing their values, identity, and self-esteem.

Communities around the world are beginning to understand the consequences of the transformation in the way we view screen content. The shared experience of watching together is being replaced by algorithms serving viewers a personalised (some call it a “radically individualised”) approach,<sup>i</sup> especially on platforms like YouTube, where content is designed to keep viewers, especially children, mesmerised, watching content that is being pushed to them, rather than deliberately chosen. Some of that content is nourishing. Much of it is not. Increasingly, it’s AI slop.

In a world saturated with harmful dross, we must provide Australian children and their families with better options.

### Engaging The Audience

*“Every time I play part of an episode of Thalu, I see my First Nations students sit slightly straighter in their chairs – I can see the instant boost of pride in them from seeing First Nations actors performing on screen”*

Kay, a teacher at Sands State School, Qld, 2025

When Australian children see their lives reflected on screen, they experience recognition and affirmation and gain positive role models; the characters and stories help them to imagine all the possibilities for someone who looks and sounds like them. But our nation’s kids are not a homogeneous group. We need an array of Australian stories, from different producers and from around our country, reflecting the full diversity of children and their lives, on all the platforms children turn to for entertainment.

## Engaging The Audience

*"Watching Crazy Fun Park is like taking a ride on a ghost train; it's thrilling, fun and a little creepy, but as Gaiman points out, you know the ride will eventually end, and you'll "step out into the daylight once again"...Stories can be so much more than just "nice". They can be training grounds for children to practice their response to fear in a supervised environment when we give them the dignity of risk."*

Cherie Gilmour, *The Age*,  
16 August 2023

## Children's screen content contributes to social cohesion and media literacy

***"Australian children's television reflects the richness of our communities. Stories featuring migrant families, First Nations perspectives, LGBTQIA young people and multicultural contexts broaden children and young people's understanding of citizenship. For example, My Place explores identity and history across generations, while First Day offers a contemporary lens on inclusion and respect. Eddie's Li'l Homies celebrates Aboriginal culture and language, Mustangs FC tackles gender equality and The PM's Daughter explores activism and civic engagement. These stories show that citizenship is shaped by identity and lived experience, helping build empathy and an inclusive view of what it means to be an active member of the community."***

– Dr Keith Heggart, University of Technology Sydney 2026

The screen stories we watch influence how we think about others, as well as how we think about ourselves. They are an opportunity to walk in someone else's shoes and consider what it's like to be them.

Australian screen stories breathe energy and meaning into learning. All the content the ACTF invests in is repurposed by us for use by Australian schools and to support Australian curriculum priorities. Content is adapted to support teachers to teach consent and respectful relationships, civics and citizenship, and a myriad of other topics, demonstrating the enduring public value of Australian children's screen content beyond its initial release date.

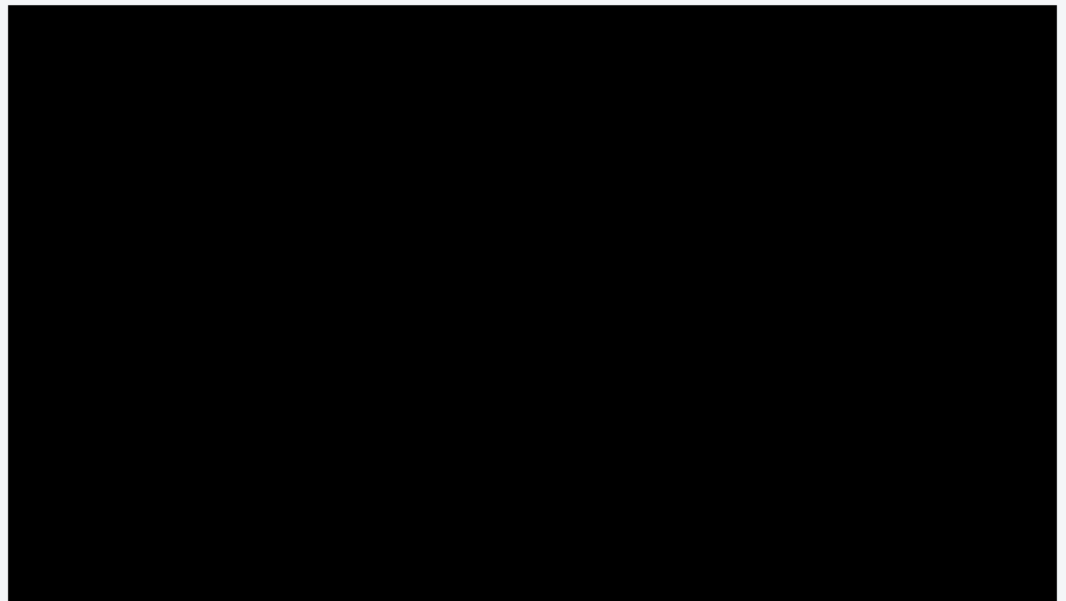
In an age of misinformation, when traditional, trusted information sources are no longer the primary way we access and absorb information, screen media literacy has never been more important. It equips students with the skills to think critically, recognise how values and lived experiences shape beliefs, and navigate a world of competing perspectives. For that reason, we bring students from all over Australia together with the storytellers and creators of the shows we support, through interactive webinars designed to "look under the bonnet" and see how screen content is made.<sup>ii</sup>

## Australian children's screen content provides opportunities for training and upskilling within the broader screen sector

The production of children's screen content plays a vital role in the screen sector ecosystem, employing people across Australia, including in regional areas, and offering training opportunities and career pathways that are not as readily available in other types of production. A children's series is often the type of production where commissioners and producers are prepared to try out someone new or invite a crew member to take the next step up in their career. Many of our most skilled practitioners on camera and behind the scenes have learned their craft on a children's television project. It is a much-needed talent escalator in an industry where opportunities for new entrants are diminishing.<sup>iii</sup>

### Centrality of The Artist

Jeffrey Walker as Bronson Twist in Series 2 of *Round The Twist*. Right: Walker later directing *Dance Academy: The Movie* - a powerful example of the long-term creative pathways fostered through Australian children's television.



## Australian children's screen content is entertaining audiences here and around the world in an ever-changing media landscape

Whilst Screen Australia Drama Reports and ACMA reports point out the indisputable fact that children's television production in Australia has been in decline since the commercial broadcasters pulled out in 2020, we should also acknowledge that, over the same period, an extraordinary breadth and range of children's shows have been produced in Australia and that audiences have responded.

Australian families love their *Bluey*. They also love *Ginger and the Vegesaur*, *Kangaroo Beach*, *Knee High Spies*, *Do Not Watch This Show*, *Little J & Big Cuz*, and all the other Australian preschool shows on ABC Kids. In fact, several of these shows are among the most-watched on iView.<sup>iv</sup>

When it was announced that a new series of *Little Lunch* was going into production this year, the internet reacted: parents were quick to let it be known that this was one of their family's favourite shows.

Australian children also love relatable comedies like *The Inbestigators* and *Hardball*, and now they can enjoy the newest addition to those ranks, *Caper Crew*. Sometimes, however, families are less familiar with the shows for this older age group and struggle to find them as their children leave the ABC viewing environment. That's why addressing discoverability and prominence for children's shows is so important.

Apart from delivering for Australian audiences, Australian children's content is among the most widely exported of all Australian content, featuring on a wide range of platforms. Shows such as *Maverix* and *The Inbestigators* are seen worldwide on Netflix. Hulu has *Crazy Fun Park* for the United States, and *Tales From Outer Suburbia* is growing an audience on BYUtv. The BBC has *Bluey*, *Knee High Spies*, *Little Lunch*, *Spooky Files* and more. *Kangaroo Beach* is on Nickelodeon UK. Nearly all the content the ACTF represents is on Pacific Australia TV, and all our First Nations content is on FXN in North America. Scandinavia, Germany and France have also been good markets for Australian children's screen content. Children's content, therefore, plays a role in "soft diplomacy", contributing to international understanding of Australia, its values, and its people.

### First Nations First

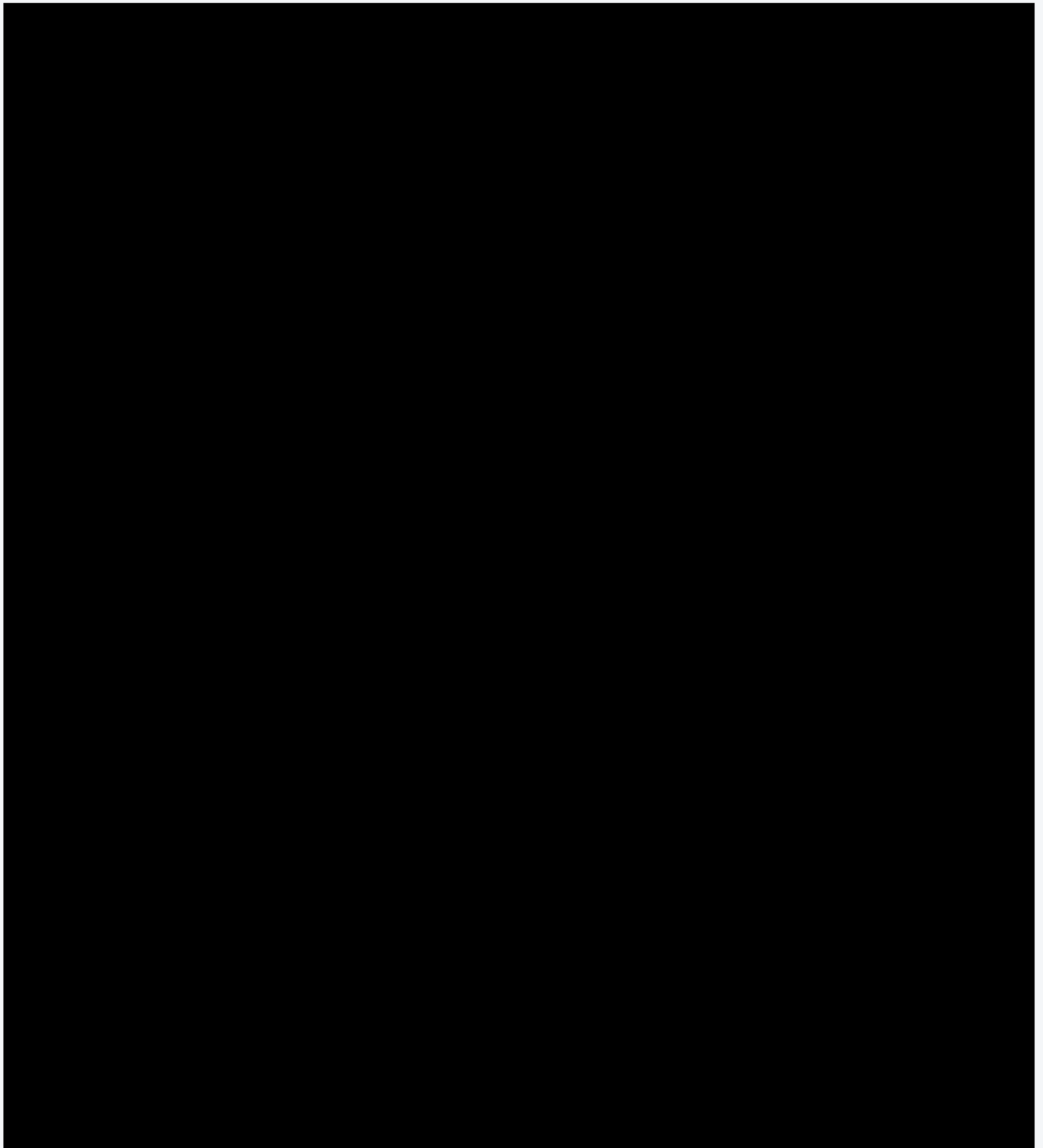
*"Burrumbi Kids is monumental in the way it promotes positive self-identity to Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences. It allows Indigenous children and their families to see themselves represented through shared experiences. It also recognises the importance of a culturally diverse audience, providing opportunities to learn more about Indigenous perspectives and knowledge."*

Patrick McKenzie, Koorie Mail,  
16 November 2022

### Centrality of The Artist

*"Growing up Yolgnu Boy was my favourite movie of all time, because I was finding out who I was as an Indigenous person, and that inspired me to go out and find out more. Watching that movie, I just felt so proud."*

Kyle Shilling, actor, *Home and Away*, speaking to TV Tonight  
8 April 2026



## Children's Screen Content In Crisis

### The Collapse of the Policy Levers and Reliance on Direct Funding

The creation of children's content is disadvantaged because it does not command the levels of investment from commissioners that content for adults does. Neither does its performance compete with adult content on the same metrics. Commissioners rate the success of an adult production on its performance in its first weeks on the channel or platform. The comparable children's audience is smaller, and fewer resources are devoted to marketing and promoting children's shows. So, of course, a new children's show doesn't make the same splash when it launches. But children are repeat viewers, and the children's audience is constantly refreshed every few years, so its long tail frequently outlasts an adult show.<sup>v</sup> (By which time, someone counting numbers has already dismissed it and moved on).<sup>vi</sup>

Australia has a four-decade-long legacy of outstanding Australian children's television, made possible through a combination of government support and content regulation, on the basis that there is public value in television that speaks directly to Australian children and which reflects Australian themes, language and social values. The establishment of Australian children's television regulations and the ACTF, combined with direct subsidy through FFC/Screen Australia and support for the ABC, led to the creation of world-class children's television including *Round The Twist*, *Spellbinder*, *Blinky Bill*, *Mortified*, *Lockie Leonard*, *Dance Academy* and *Little Lunch*, that many Australians grew up with and remember fondly.<sup>vii</sup>

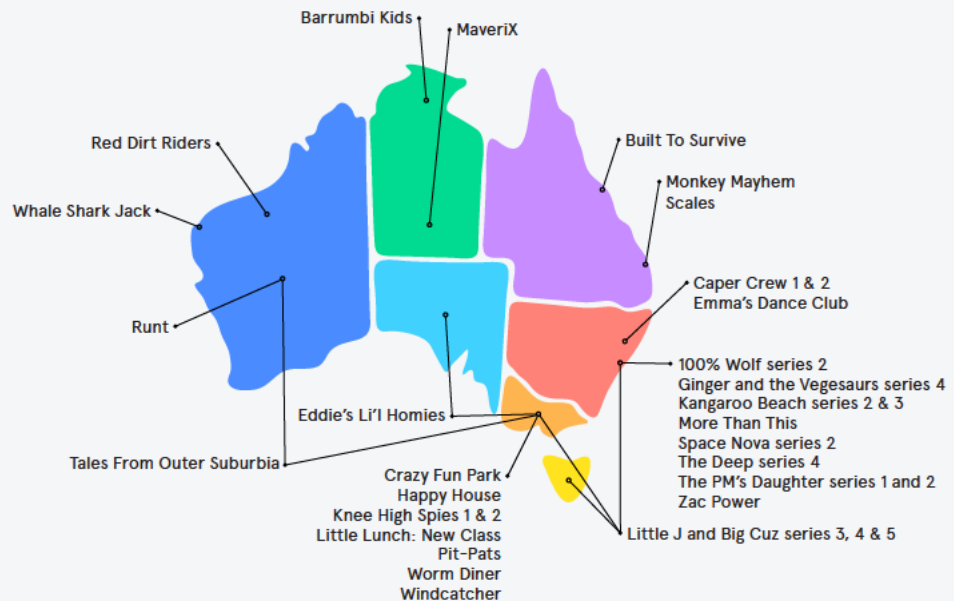
However, this multi-pronged framework was developed for analogue broadcast conditions, and has collapsed under a permanently disrupted, changing media environment. A fragmented, multi-platform, on-demand, and time-shifted viewing environment providing a global smorgasbord of content has overtaken the previously dominant linear broadcasting model.

There are no longer any obligations for broadcasters or streaming platforms to screen Australian children's content.

Instead, since 2020, the production of Australian children's screen content has largely relied on additional funding for the ACTF, alongside ABC and Screen Australia investment.

## ACTF expenditure 1 July 2020 – 30 June 2026

Over the last six years, ACTF has invested over \$4 million in development funding and is investing over \$36 million in 34 different projects from around Australia, as illustrated below:



This level of investment has been made possible through increased funding from the Commonwealth Government. In the 2020-2021 financial year, Commonwealth funding for the ACTF was \$2.8 million. Our funding now stands at \$7 million per year, but we are at financial capacity, while demand for ACTF support is greater than ever.<sup>viii</sup>

## The Operating Environment

Production budgets have risen 30% over the above six-year period,<sup>ix</sup> but the licence fees paid by broadcasters have not kept pace. The minimum licence fees set by Screen Australia for children's content have increased by 13.6%, having been static for decades. (They will increase by another 10% in July 2026). These licence fees are less than half the minimum Screen Australia sets for adult drama, although standard adult drama and mini-series drama are not twice as expensive to make.<sup>x</sup> The funding gap for children's content is therefore growing wider. Both the ABC and ACTF are contributing more equity investment (in addition to licence fees and distribution advances) to cover this gap, but this means the number of episodes per series is now significantly reduced, as more funds are going into shorter series. It is harder for shorter series to make an impact, whether measured by audience, returns, or jobs.

Children's screen content has always been especially vulnerable within the broader environment, but now it is facing an existential crisis. Children's content is the most endangered screen content globally.<sup>xi</sup> Free-to-air commercial television is ditching children's content, there are fewer well-funded public broadcasters,

and the consolidation of streaming platforms and distributors means there are fewer buyers. As ever, international broadcasters pay humbly for children's content. So, distributors are pulling out of representing kids' content or not paying the kinds of advances needed to pull together a production budget. As if to prove the point, the international KidScreen market has closed down.

Children's content is not a driver of new subscriptions, as a new landmark drama for adult audiences is, but rather a tool for subscription retention. Unfortunately, though, a streamer can build a children's library by re-licensing old favourites for children who might be discovering them for the first time. Opportunities for fresh, new, innovative Australian children's content are becoming harder than ever to secure. The ACTF's experience and capacity in distribution are therefore vitally important for the Australian industry.

### **The role of the ACTF**

The withdrawal of the free-to-air commercial networks from the children's television space has seen a dramatic reduction in the amount of children's screen content produced in Australia.<sup>xii</sup> The ABC is now the undisputed home of Australian children's TV. Given that it is a highly trusted, advertising-free space open to all Australians, this is a good thing. But children are also watching content on streaming platforms and YouTube,<sup>xiii</sup> and the ACTF believes that Australian children's content should be available on all the platforms children use. As well as supporting content for the ABC, we support content for NITV and streaming platforms. We have brokered the deals for three children's films on Stan, for example, and for a co-commission between NITV and Netflix. With no regulatory incentive for the streaming platforms to deliberately choose children's content within their Australian content spend, it's necessary for the ACTF to spend funds in a way that makes it attractive for a streaming platform to commission Australian children's content. Whilst ensuring quality Australian children's content remains on the ABC, NITV and on streaming platforms, the ACTF must also look to invest in digital-first content for platforms like YouTube. Taking a digital-first approach to commissioning new, original content for YouTube is important because:

- Children are watching content on YouTube more than anywhere else;
- Commissioners like Netflix are now sourcing new children's content commissions directly from YouTube;
- There are fewer commissioners in the market, and rarely any options for younger producers and new program creators to be commissioned. The middle-tier has hollowed out, and there is now high-end, high-cost production for broadcast and streaming at one end of the spectrum, and digital-first content at the other.

We are aligning the ACTF with where the audience and the business are going while maintaining our objective to raise the bar and elevate the content offering for Australian children on every platform.

# ACTF Recommendations

## Embrace Children's Screen Content within a National Cultural Policy that elevates the Arts for children and young people

Australian children's screen content is providing an extraordinary return within Australia's screen ecosystem, delivering on all five existing pillars in the National Cultural Policy in spades. The social impact of Australian children's screen content means that there is additional public value in every dollar spent on it. There is significant potential to meet our nation's social, cultural, educational, and economic objectives by supporting high-value children's screen content and securing its prominence across all the platforms children use. This means embracing children's screen content within a National Cultural Policy that elevates the Arts for children and young people.

Strong cultural infrastructure and a multi-pronged suite of interventions are required to underpin and ensure the continued production of children's content

### The ACTF recommends:

- A new pillar, *Next Generation Now*, to embed children and young people in the National Cultural Policy, to ensure the sustained and targeted support required for children and young people;
- Acknowledgement of the vital role of the ABC and SBS in commissioning Australian screen content, and update ABC and SBS Charters to explicitly include children and young people;
- Providing ABC and SBS/NITV with updated, ring-fenced funding specifically for children's and youth content, and make reporting obligations around this funding transparent;
- Ensure transparent and consistent reporting from the SVOD services against the new streaming obligations and monitor the extent to which new children's content is commissioned over the next 4 years. Consider ways to strengthen the commissioning of children's programs in accordance with the regulations upon review.
- Increase funding for the ACTF to enable it to:
  - Invest more (via development, distribution and equity), including in longer-running series and digital-first content;
  - Incentivise commercial platforms like SVODs to commission children's content in partnership with the ACTF; and

- Market and promote Australian children’s content so that Australian families, children and educators can find the content that’s made for them and ensure that content has the longest possible life.
- Increase funding for Screen Australia and ensure that funding remains accessible to producers of children’s content. Screen Australia’s funding has not kept pace with rising production costs.
- Increase the producer offset to 40% (same as feature films) for children’s content, to support producers in financing children’s content and sharing in the success their work generates;
- Investigate ways to elevate the marketing and discoverability for children’s and youth content, possibly via:
  - Prominence on Smart TV interfaces (a dedicated space on the interface to promote new Australian children’s content);
  - A “Find Australian Children’s Content” App that enables parents and children to find Australian children’s content across all searchable platforms, including ABC iView, SBS OnDemand and SVODs; and
  - Requirements that the YouTube algorithm prioritise publicly funded Australian children’s screen content.
- Review and recalibrate the Significant Australian Content (SAC) test and the tax offset arrangements to ensure that culturally significant Australian productions (and the recommendations outlined above) can be funded.<sup>xiv</sup>

### Engaging The Audience

*“I really loved watching Space Nova because it mixes exciting space adventures with cool science ideas...The part I liked most was the animation and design of the planets and spaceships. Everything looked bright, futuristic and full of imagination. The Nova family worked really well as a team, and I liked how each character had a different strength...I definitely learned something. One example is how stars are made of elements that are also found on Earth. That made me think about how we’re all connected to the universe in a bigger way...Rating: 4.5 out of 5 stars”*

Review by Evan,<sup>10</sup>, Double Helix CSIRO Magazine

***“I wanted to take the time to thank you for creating the wonderful tv program that is Little Lunch. We have only discovered it in the last 12 months and I cannot tell you how much it has changed our lives. My daughter was in grade one last year and struggling with going to school. She had massive anxiety and tears every day and drop off was horrendous for her and so upsetting for us. I wonder if it was due to the previous year (which was her prep year) being mainly remote learning due to the multiple lockdowns in Melbourne, we will never know. But we discovered Little Lunch and she loved it, found it hilarious, and I think really identified with it and saw herself and her classmates in the program and we have never looked back. Little Lunch is the only thing that was different in our life at the time so I 100% attribute the program to her complete 180 degree change in attitude. She doesn’t love school now, but she/we no longer have the angst that we once did. So from the bottom of our hearts, thank you.”***

- Email received from Bianca on 8 February 2023

## Conclusion

At its best, children’s screen content builds self-esteem, empathy, and cultural identity, and inspires play, creativity, and learning. Sometimes, as it did for Bianca’s family, it changes lives. It makes an unheralded but emphatic contribution to our sense of community and does so long after its initial release date. However, every parent knows that much of the screen content served to children via algorithms is about distraction and consumption rather than entertainment and story. It’s developing shorter attention spans and undermining children’s development and growth. We must provide parents and children with better options.

We cannot take the production of positive children’s screen content for granted. It is more important than ever before. We should prioritise the children’s audience as we review tax incentives and direct funding for the screen industry, address discoverability, and consider all the policy levers at our disposal. Without direct intervention and the ACTF, the children’s audience is sidelined.

While the industry around us continues to evolve, the ACTF is positioned for this moment. We operate at the intersection of culture, education and screen. With the Commonwealth funding we’ve received, we’ve defied current conditions and expectations, supporting a diverse slate of new Australian children’s programs.

The demonstrated value of our development, executive production, and distribution arms gives us the flexibility to move with the market – to form partnerships, match projects with the right platforms, and support producers in bringing Australian stories to life.

We support stories that will continue to be watched by future generations across all the platforms they engage with, and bring them to life for schools to use, enhancing their contribution to social cohesion and modern Australian values.

Underpinning all this is our highly trusted reputation and legacy – through supporting shows that have contributed to our culture, acquiring a life of their own in the memories and imaginations of Australians, and entertaining audiences around the world.

Finding ways to continue bringing Australian children’s content to Australian children and their families on public and commercial platforms is a challenging issue in a complex world, but one that is vital to a thriving national culture that embraces and includes our children. We are a uniquely Australian solution.

### Engaging The Audience

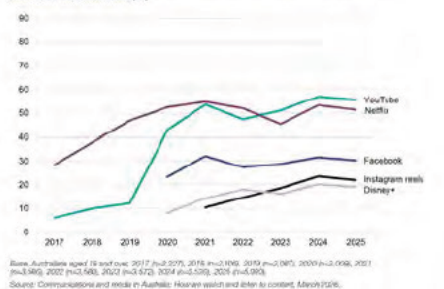
*"I wanted to write to say thank you for "Caper Crew". My two daughters (6 and 9) absolutely loved it, as did my husband and I. It was a delight to watch it together and I am stoked that it has shepherded the use of "yoinked" into our family vocabulary...We all hope there will be a season 2."*

Feedback via the ACTF website contact form, from Karen H  
16 April 2026

## Footnotes

- <sup>i</sup> Baroness Beeban Kidron, Children's Media Summit 26, United Kingdom
- <sup>ii</sup> In 2025 52,204 students and 1,016 schools participated in ACTF webinars.
- <sup>iii</sup> For example, Jeffrey Walker, an experienced director whose credits include *The Artful Dodger* and *Modern Family* and *Dance Academy*, began his career in children's television: first with his recurring role as Bronson on *Round the Twist* and later his first television directing was on Jonathan Shiff's children's programs. Joanna Werner, producer and executive producer of the award-winning series *The Newsreader*, started her career working on the children's program *H2O: Just Add Water*, before creating her own series and production company to produce *Dance Academy*, a hugely successful series which has aired in 180 countries and has retained a loyal and dedicated fan base in the 15 years since it premiered. *Dance Academy* was also the first series for co-creator and head writer, Samantha Strauss, who is now a multi-Logie Award-winning Australian screenwriter known for *Nine Perfect Strangers* and *Apple Cider Vinegar*, and has set up the joint-venture production company Picking Scabs with Sea-Saw Films. Children's television has fewer barriers to entry, enabling people to step into their first roles, step up to head of department roles, and create a career pipeline for Australian talent and a sustainable industry. Other examples of talent who started in children's television or experienced major career progression due to the children's industry include Tim Bain, Nick Verso, Guy Edmonds, and Yingna Lu.
- <sup>iv</sup> When the ABC tells an audience how well a local adult drama is performing it will say "it's the number one non-kids show on the platform". This is because at any given time, several children's preschool titles are the most-watched programs on the platform.
- <sup>v</sup> All four seasons of *Round the Twist* just sold to ITV in the UK!
- <sup>vi</sup> A few weeks after *The Inbestigators* dropped on Netflix, executives told us its performance was disappointing. Years later it consistently appears in the Netflix 6-month performance report and is one of their most consistent performers. In the most recent engagement report, *The Inbestigators* ranks in the top 6.5% of all Netflix titles globally. It continues to be the most viewed Australian children's title, ranking third and fifth among Australian titles overall – <https://about.netflix.com/en/news/what-we-watched-the-second-half-of-2025>. As the adult titles ahead of it come and go, this would make it the most watched Australian drama on Netflix.
- <sup>vii</sup> Research Paper by Swinburne/RMIT Universities available on the ACTF website: [Kids' TV Memories: Audience Perspectives on the Roles and Long-term Value of Australian Children's Television](#).
- <sup>viii</sup> Commonwealth funding to the ACTF over the six-year period is set out below:
- | Commonwealth Funding       |                   |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 July 2020- 30 June 2021  | 2,894,500         |
| 1 July 2021- 30 June 2022  | 12,915,000        |
| 1 July 2022 - 30 June 2023 | 12,941,000        |
| 1 July 2023 - 30 June 2024 | 3,208,000         |
| 1 July 2024 - 30 June 2025 | 6,830,000         |
| 1 July 2025 - 30 June 2026 | 6,975,000         |
|                            | <b>45,763,500</b> |
- <sup>ix</sup> We used all multiple-episode series that the ACTF has contributed to from 2020 to 2026 to calculate an increase of production costs of 30%. It is worth noting that this percentage increase is considerably less than that reported by Screen Australia for children's TV and VOD drama, over the same time period – <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/insights-and-trends/trends-production/australian-tv-vod/childrens-tv-and-vod-drama/>. This report included the production budget for a 90-minute children's VOD film in the final year, which, in our view, skews the result.
- <sup>x</sup> This is an 'average cost per hour' comparison, from 2020 to 2026, between all productions ACTF has contributed finance towards and Screen Australia's reporting for Australian General Free-To-Air TV and BVOD drama and mini-series – <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/insights-and-trends/trends-production/australian-tv-vod/australian-general-fta-tv-and-bvod/>.
- <sup>xi</sup> For Kids Media, Will "Survive till '25" Become "Sh\*t Bricks in '26"? | LinkedIn Piece by Emily Horgan aptly sums up the global crisis for kids TV production.
- <sup>xii</sup> Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), 2024. 'TV in Australia: Spending on Commercial TV Programs—Aggregated Report 2023-2024 FY' – [https://www.acma.gov.au/commercial-tv-program-expenditure -- in combination with -- Screen Australia, 2023. 'Drama Report 2022-23'](https://www.acma.gov.au/commercial-tv-program-expenditure--in-combination-with--Screen-Australia,2023.'Drama-Report-2022-23).
- <sup>xiii</sup> Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), 2025. 'Communications and media in Australia—Trends and developments in viewing and listening 2024-25'. <https://www.acma.gov.au/sites/default/files/2026-03/Trends%20and%20developments%20in%20viewing%20and%20listening%202024-25.pdf>

Figure 2: Top 5 online services used to watch content in the previous 7 days to June 2017 and June 2025 (%)



- <sup>xiv</sup> A \$150 million film like *The Fall Guy*, attracts offset and incentives in the order of \$60 million, which is more than half Screen Australia's overall funding. And *The Great Gatsby* and *Elvis* qualify for the Significant Australian Content test, enabling them to claim the full 40% offset for Australian feature films. It must be possible to realign the funding envelope to provide greater support for distinctive cultural content through Screen Australia and the ACTF.



ABN 93 005 986 952

3, 145 Smith Street, Fitzroy Victoria 3065, Australia