

Hello,

My name is Andrew Fraser and I am a Production Executive at Causeway Films. I am a graduate of the National Institute of Dramatic Art. I attended the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School. I spent my formative years dancing, singing, acting and making theatre with ambitions of working in the film industry. In many ways, I have achieved my goal and yet the current landscape does not inspire hope. It's easy to feel like you're on a sinking ship, despite the fact I work at one of the best, most inspiring filmmaking companies in Australia responsible of some of the most impactful Australian films of the last ten years – a time of significant change and upheaval for the arts in Australia.

I want to believe the Australian cinema, television and theatre has a future in reaching domestic and international audiences. I believe this policy has the potential to help make this happen.

I want Australian audiences to be proud of what Australians create and to see that it is possible to be an artist, not that it has to be a hobby only or a career reserved for those who have financial stability from generational wealth or acquired benefactors. For Australian audiences to show up, there needs to be Australian content worth seeing and we need to know it exists.

I want Australian filmmakers to be able create distinctive, original films that don't seem embarrassed by or limited in their Australian identity. Australian narrative features make up 3.8% of cinema releases in a year. The distribution system does not support Australian films, and our reliance and overconsumption of international stories is destroying the appetite for Australian content.

I want to see cinema culture stay alive. Independent cinemas are amazing spaces that continue to support Australian content, and yet that are at constant risk of financial ruin. The production funding system, as it stands, only focuses on creative decision making in a small number of institutions. When private investment was incentivised in Australia, Australia had its highest audience share for local cinema in post-war history and birthed the international careers of numerous artists.

Cinemas are not only important for their financial contribution or mechanism for distribution, but as social hubs. In an increasingly isolated world, cinemas remain an important way to connect with community, long after the film has ended in the theatre. Our cultural infrastructure, in its current model, is on life support.

We need a controlled private investment incentive and qualifying Australian productions similar to the ESIC tax incentive to help increase the production volume of risky, bold and imaginative work to create healthy competition and to help more films get made. This could exist alongside the Producer Offset, which also needs rehabilitation. We need a platform neutral offset that acknowledges the reality of streaming and different films needs depending on audience viewing habits. 96.4% of Netflix viewing time in Australia is dedicated to non-local content. This needs to change.

We need permanent, year round export infrastructure for Australian screen content. The Location Offset, as it currently stands, attracts international productions, but the investment in outbound cultural exports about Australians is negligible in comparison. We have to give Australian content a chance to compete and not turn our country into a labour service for American cinema. However, with how economically difficult it is to be an artist, we have such a dearth of diversity of creative voices in our current system that it's no wonder audience interest in Australian content is completely waning.

Artists also need a better living wage. I don't think it's normal that I work a full time 38 hour week at a top production company, with many additional hours unpaid overtime, and that I continue to work a hospitality job after work and on weekends, alongside freelance work as a writer and photographer, amid the odd acting job, to support myself living in Sydney and pursuing a creative career. I feel sick at the generations above me and their acceptance of this being the norm amongst young people not pursuing traditional career paths whilst they hoard money and then have the audacity to accuse us of being entitled. We are being left a world worse than the one those who raised us lived through, which honestly, feels like a total betrayal.

Cinemas need to be cheaper, theatre tickets need to be cheaper – we have to give Audiences a reason and a chance to leave the house to experience culture together and raise the next audience of Australians who are proud of the cultural heritage and their stories.

The National Cultural Policy review is essential and I hope for a better outcome for the generations after to me to achieve their dreams and create stories that reflect our National identity and shine across the globe.

Sincerely,

Andrew Fraser