

I am an independent Australian film producer who has been working in the screen industry since 2016. I also attend the cinema approximately every 2 weeks. I live regionally but travel to cities across Australia for film festivals and special screenings of Australian films which aren't always available regionally.

Unfortunately, until I joined the Australian screen industry – my exposure to Australian screen stories was limited to: The Castle, Neighbours, Home and Away and Playschool. I became so excited to be exposed to awesome Australian stories from epic drama films in cinema, independent documentaries and series.

Although Australian series have become easier to find with the development of streaming – the community connection of seeing stories and intimate Q&As at cinema is something so incredible but it's a shame they're still so difficult to find in cinema. You need to be on the pulse of cinema schedules and Australian film releases in order to understand how to access these important cultural stories.

I feel strongly that Cinemas should be treated as cultural infrastructure, with financial incentive support for independent and chain cinemas if they hit a certain quota of Australian films per month or per annum. It seems interesting to me that libraries, museums and other cultural precincts such as performing arts centres are state and federally funded while something like a cinema doesn't have the same support. A cultural organisation that offers Australian stories should still be eligible for government funds and support even as a private for-profit business.

For example, if the incentive was to provide a cinema with a \$20,000 fund for screening 10% Australian content throughout a financial year – I believe firmly that this will;

- benefit independent cinemas; keeping these important historical, cultural and artistic spaces available to Australian audiences.

- increase Australian audience exposure to Australian stories, offering this financial support will entice chain cinemas to program a greater number of Australian films, currently the uptake of genuine Australian cinema in chain precincts is dismal. These chains (Event, Hoyts, Reading) are the primary locations for people watching films – therefore exposure to Australian films from these platforms will generate larger audience and box office numbers. Australian audiences need to be treated as active participants in Australian cinema, not passive consumers.

- currently regional Australian cinemas -even if independent businesses program similarly to chain cinemas Across the country. This means that generally, their programming is aligned with American Hollywood or 'IP' superhero/franchise films – which are rarely Australian stories. An incentive like this will allow regional cinemas to actively offer Australian stories to regional audience. Its so important to ensure that the regional, rural and remote audiences are able to engage with our unique stories and our regional businesses are supported.
- financially stabilise Australian filmmakers with incentivised opportunities for theatrical release across a variety of cinema types.

The incentive could have various teers which could potentially change their fund eligibility some examples are listed below;

- number of new-release Australian films screened, recommending a minimum of 10% (important that cinemas don't rely purely on 'back catalogue' screenings of iconic Australian cinema but actively engage new-release stories for the public)
- retention of the Australian films screened (e.g. how many times was one Australian film screened – was it only offered as a premiere or did they have a two week, four week, 6 week release in their cinema? – The higher the retention – the larger the incentive reward.)
- bonus support for actively engaging Q&As for audience to connect directly with the filmmakers following a film screening.

I grew up in a world which had DVD, book and music stores but slowly many of these have faded away. As a grow as an Australian producer, I hate to watch cinemas closing or being bought out by chains which I know won't offer Australian, or independent options to audience. The Australian government has supported the making of Australian films for generations and I want to ensure that these stories continue to be offered to audiences for generations to come. Film should be both a cultural experience and a business to keep our industry thriving.