

National Cultural Policy Consultation

Joint Submission of Australia's Screen Industry Guilds, Unions and Bodies

22 May 2026

Introduction

The screen guilds, unions, and industry bodies make this submission from a shared commitment to the future of Australian screen culture, the strength of our industry, and the people who bring it to life.

Australia should have the conditions to make ambitious, distinctive and high-quality screen work that connects with audiences and strengthens our cultural presence at home and internationally. Achieving this requires policy settings that give practical force to the five pillars of the National Cultural Policy and recognise screen as a central part of Australia's cultural, economic and creative life.

Our aspiration is for success to be measured by more than production volume, market activity or short-term economic return. We want an industry in which:

- Australian stories are visible, distinctive and able to find their audiences;
- Creative workers and businesses can flourish sustainably, and be treated fairly and safely;
- Creators have sustainable careers;
- Rights, credits and remuneration are protected;
- The diversity of our nation is reflected in the voices that have creative authority, especially those who are otherwise underrepresented; and
- The skills, institutions, and pathways not only exist, but are resilient with capacity to grow, enabling Australia to keep making work of lasting cultural, social and economic value.

Reaching audiences is not only a question of platform prominence or marketing, although these matter. Audience connection begins earlier: with the kinds of work the system enables us to imagine, develop and make. Australian audiences are more likely to embrace work that feels bold, specific, authored, relevant and alive. A screen culture shaped only by market signals or risk-aversion will tend to narrow the range of stories, voices, forms and creative risks that reach the screen.

Public policy therefore has a vital role in supporting creative ambition and risk, including work that may be culturally significant before it is market-validated. This includes drama, documentary, children's content, animation, comedy, First Nations-led work, regional stories, culturally specific work, experimental and hybrid forms, and projects from emerging and

under-represented creators. Australian content must be visible, but visibility alone is not enough: the work must also be distinctive enough to matter.

At the same time, the screen sector is changing rapidly. Technology, platforms and audience behaviour are moving faster than traditional funding and regulatory systems. Australian screen culture now exists across cinemas, broadcasters, streamers, online platforms, games and beyond. The next National Cultural Policy must support the established screen sector while also recognising new creator-led, platform-native and audience-direct pathways.

A thriving screen industry cannot be built by choosing between traditional production and emerging models. Australia needs a broad, future-facing screen ecology: one that supports public broadcasters, independent producers, streamers, cinemas and international production, while also enabling Australian-owned IP, digital-first creators, low-budget filmmakers and new forms of screen authorship to grow.

This is our opportunity to imagine what tomorrow could look like: a screen industry that backs creative risk, protects human creativity, supports sustainable careers, adapts to new platforms and technologies. That is how we believe we can achieve a screen sector that is commercially active, culturally ambitious, and makes Australian screen work that audiences embrace, remember, and claim as their own.

AI: What must we not allow it to do?

Australia has a highly skilled and effective screen workforce made up of creative workers who are used to innovating. Historically creators, especially those in the screen industry, are early adopters of technology to improve their skills and craft.

For everyone in screen, the indiscriminate use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to erode the value of skills, training, experience, and intellectual property at every part of the screen project, from development through to post-production and marketing and through the long life of a screen product. Some parts of the workforce are seeing widespread use, while others are seeing a slow uptake, if any at all. Even in a best case scenario, though, it is anticipated the unfettered adoption of generative AI will displace workers and reduce the overall growth of employment in the sector. This is particularly concerning as the creative economy, which contributes some \$67 billion to Australia's economy, has been growing at a faster rate than employment in other parts of the economy, despite the challenges of Covid.

Generative AI adoption means different things for different trades and crafts at different parts of the development, production and post-production process. Some parts of this process will mean there can be greater efficiencies but others, it will be a diminution of storytelling and craft and an erosion of the distinct Australianess of story.

Generative AI will impact the way we value creativity and craft. At every level, wherever decisions are made, all creatives must be part of the discussion and part of the process and in charge of outcomes. Funding should not be going to any project that could diminish the role and future jobs of creators. Australia's screen creators are uniquely placed to help drive solutions to the challenges AI poses to our industry - we just need to be part of the decision-making.

What is ‘Australian’: Who we are, and why it matters?

Currently the screen industry works under multiple definitions of Australian content. Both pre-date the streaming era, and pre-date changes to content quotas - both the changes made to terrestrial broadcast quotas during Covid and the local content obligations introduced in 2025.

These definitions occur in a variety of contexts, ranging from a tax treatment of production expenditure, to the minimum requirements for broadcasting, or the expenditure required in the commissioning of works for pay-TV and streaming. These schemes, while developed in the shadows of one another, are not designed to operate in a holistically consistent or considered manner.

Asking what it means for a screen project to be ‘Australian’ is itself complex - changing with our shifting understanding of our own collective identity. This task is not made any easier by these different regimes, and the different tests they apply. Nevertheless, we consider this to be a juncture for the Government to consider that question across the various schemes in a systematic way.

We recommend that the Government review the definitions and tests used across broadcast regulation, streaming obligations, offsets and funding programs to ensure they are flexible, transparent, and fit for purpose in the contemporary screen environment, while recognising Australian creative leadership. For if we are to develop *our* National Cultural Policy, we must ask: for whose benefit is it meant to operate and who and what is it meant to protect?

The tests do not prioritise the engagement of a majority of key creatives in the screen content as a condition of access to the offsets. A modern definition should ask whether Australian creative talent is central to the work’s origination, authorship, production and cultural identity.

International models may be instructive. Canada, for example, uses a points-based system for certain content certification processes that allocates points for Canadian key creative roles. To be certified as Canadian content (CanCon) by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) (CAVCO) and the Canadian Audio-Visual Certification Office (CAVCO), productions must generally earn a minimum of 6 out of 10 points based on key creative functions (director, screenwriter, lead performers, composer) being Canadian. Furthermore, at least 75% of total production costs and 75% of post-production costs must be paid to Canadians.

A Sustainable Sector: How do we get the balance of in-bound investment and Australian-led work right?

Australia’s screen sector has been successful in attracting (and should continue to attract) international production. Inward investment supports jobs, infrastructure, studios, foreign investment, technical expertise, crew development, regional development and global relationships.

Emphasis on and broad public support for inbound production is not culturally neutral, and should therefore not subordinate, preclude, or receive disproportionate support in comparison to Australian developed work, and its export to the world.

As a general principle, where international productions benefit from Australian tax offsets, state incentives, locations, crews and infrastructure, they should also contribute to the long-term development of the Australian screen sector. Their investment should, to the greatest degree possible, be retained for the benefit of developing and putting Australian projects on screens.

We ask the Government to review screen incentives, priorities, and funding settings to ensure they deliver a strong balance between inbound investment and Australian-led work. This should consider:

- how publicly supported international productions provide meaningful training, attachments and skills transfer for Australian creatives, performers, crew and heads of department;
- strengthening pathways for Australian key creatives to gain credits on larger-scale productions made in Australia;
- incentive settings that do not crowd out Australian-originated work, Australian-owned IP, or local production capacity;
- increasing transparency around the cultural, workforce and career benefits delivered by publicly supported in-bound productions; and
- strong, dedicated support and strategies for the development, production and export of Australian-originated films, series, documentaries, children's content, animation and digital screen IP.

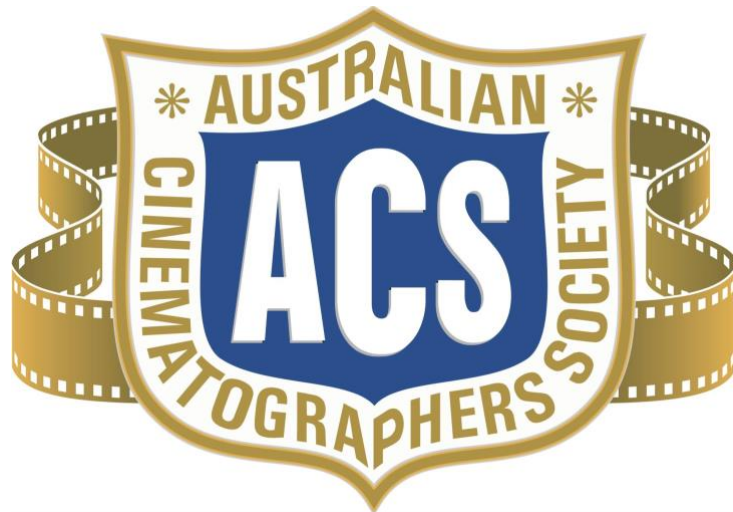
Australia should not have to choose between attracting global production and building Australian screen culture. Our goal must be for an Australian screen industry with the capacity, confidence and creative leadership to make work of world-class quality - both as a production hub, and a key exporter of stories. Put simply, we consider that we should take pride in our nation's creative outputs - and be prepared to celebrate for their value both to Australian culture, and our ability to bring stories to the world.

Who we are

This submission represents the views of the organisations set out below, who together represent the breadth and depth of Australia's screen sector.



The Australian Guild of Screen Composers represents screen composers nationally, advocating for their rights and offers advice on remuneration and copyright issues. The guild currently has over 500 active members but advocates for all screen composers.



The ACS is a not-for-profit organisation providing a forum for cinematographers to further develop their skills through mutual co-operation since 1958.



The Australian Production Design Guild (APDG) was established in 2009 as a not-for-profit organisation that represents established and emerging designers and their associates in screen, live performance, events, games and digital production across Australia. The APDG is committed to nurturing excellence, raising the profile of designers and building a connected, vibrant and future-focused creative community.

australian [screen] editors

The Australian Screen Editors' Guild (ASE) is the peak body representing Editors, Assistant Editors, and Post Production Professionals in Australia. For over 30 years, we have been advocating for Editors' rights and visibility.



The Australian Screen Sound Guild (ASSG) was formed in 1988 and is the peak national body to represent and celebrate practitioners of sound for the screen in film, television, multimedia, games and other related audio industries.



The Australian Writers' Guild (AWG) represents Australia's performance writers: playwrights, screenwriters for film and television, showrunners, podcasters, comedians, game narrative designers, dramaturgs, librettists, and audio writers. We represent 2,800 performance writers in Australia. Established by writers for writers, the AWG is a democratic organisation run by its members, who each year elect a National Executive Council and State Branch Committees. Our members work together to represent their fellow writers across the industry in a number of committees such as the Theatre, Television and Games committees to negotiate for fair pay and conditions, advocate to government, and serve members' professional needs.



Screen Producers Australia (SPA) is a national industry body representing independent film, television, animation, and interactive content creators. SPA is a common voice for producers across diverse genres, and provides essential support, advocacy, and networking opportunities to protect and expand Australia's unique screen industry.