

Rebalancing Australian Screen Policy

Directors, Rights, Remuneration and a Complete Screen Ecology



The Australian Directors' Guild and
Australian Screen Directors Authorship Collecting Society

Submission to the next National Cultural Policy

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The next phase of Australian screen policy must be about building a nationally distinctive, globally competitive screen culture led by Australian creative authors, sustained by fair rights and remuneration, and connected to audiences wherever they watch.

Part 1: Executive summary, priority asks and recommendations

Executive summary

The Australian Directors' Guild and ASDACS welcome the opportunity to contribute to the development of Australia's next National Cultural Policy.

This submission is made on behalf of Australian screen directors: the creative practitioners who lead the audiovisual works through which Australians see themselves, understand one another and are seen by the world. Directors are central creative authors, cultural workers, rights-holders and leaders of complex collaborative production processes. They shape performance, image, sound, rhythm, tone, structure and meaning into the final screen work experienced by audiences.

The next National Cultural Policy is a generation-defining opportunity for Australian screen.

Australia should not aim merely to preserve production activity or compete for expenditure in a global production market. It should build a screen system designed for cultural ambition, sustainable creative careers, strong rights infrastructure and audience connection. The objective should be Australian works that are authored strongly, made fairly, culturally available, internationally competitive and remembered over time.

This ambition is directly aligned with the consultation framework for the next National Cultural Policy. The consultation paper continues the five Revive pillars - First Nations First, A Place for Every Story, Centrality of the Artist, Strong Cultural Infrastructure and Engaging the Audience - and asks how policy should respond to changing conditions for creative work, safer and fairer workplaces, creative rights in the digital environment, arts education, creative skills, lifelong learning, changing audience behaviours and discovery pathways.[1]

Australia has built a screen policy framework that is effective in many respects. It attracts production. It supports producers. It provides incentives for production expenditure. It invests in agencies, infrastructure, locations, studios, post-production, public broadcasters and content. These are important achievements.

But the framework remains incomplete.

Australia has not built an equivalent policy architecture for the creative authors of screen works. Directors and writers remain under-recognised as audiovisual authors. In recent decades, Australian screen policy has largely been organised around production companies, financing entities, commissioning structures and expenditure incentives. Those settings have delivered important benefits, and producers remain essential partners. But the result is an uneven ecology: producer-side

infrastructure is more visible, better normalised and more consistently recognised, while the institutions, rights and career infrastructure that support directors and writers remain fragile. Directors' organisations remain structurally under-resourced. Rights and remuneration settings have not kept pace with streaming, international exploitation, educational use, artificial intelligence, platform distribution or the long afterlife of screen works. Credit systems are too weak to reliably connect directors with attribution, recognition and remuneration. Career pathways for directors remain fragile, uneven and too dependent on personal resilience rather than systemic support.

Australian screen culture will not be sustainable unless cultural policy addresses the conditions under which directors create, progress, retain rights, receive credit and participate in the ongoing value of their work. Many work in conditions marked by irregular income, sporadic employment, unpaid development labour, weak bargaining power and limited participation in secondary remuneration. Cultural policy should therefore move beyond production volume alone and support the creative infrastructure needed for sustainable directing careers: fair contracts, credit integrity, moral rights, AI safeguards, secondary remuneration, paid and credit-bearing career pathways, and properly resourced representative bodies.

When directors' careers are unsustainable, Australian stories lose creative continuity. When credits and metadata fail, the cultural record is weakened. When rights infrastructure is underdeveloped, public and private investment continues to generate value without that value flowing fairly to the creators who made it possible.

The next National Cultural Policy should correct this imbalance.

Producers are essential partners in financing, organising, delivering and exploiting screen works. A healthy screen ecology needs strong producers. But it also needs strong authors, strong craft practitioners, strong rights infrastructure, strong guilds, strong collecting societies, strong public institutions, appropriate private investment settings, and meaningful pathways between Australian stories and Australian audiences.

At present, the system is unbalanced. Producer-side infrastructure benefits from recurring industry support mechanisms, including the Screen Producers Australia production levy. SPA's 2024/25 annual report records \$1,496,585 in compulsory levies revenue for the year ended 30 June 2025. The offset framework demonstrates that production-linked payments of this kind can be accommodated within the existing screen tax architecture. Only producer-side infrastructure currently has a mechanism through which payment is normalised and collected. The policy gap is that equivalent, complementary infrastructure has not been established for screen authorship and craft.

If producer-side infrastructure can be supported through recurring production-linked mechanisms, screen authorship infrastructure should not be left to memberships, intermittent grants and unpaid consultation labour.

ADG and ASDACS submit that the next National Cultural Policy should move Australian screen policy from a production-volume model to a full screen-culture model: one that supports the people, rights, pathways, institutions, investment settings and audience connections that make production culturally meaningful and economically sustainable.

Measuring success has always been one of the challenges of screen policy. Production activity is easier to count than cultural value. Expenditure and jobs are easier to measure than audience connection and sustainable careers. The next National Cultural Policy should adopt a more complete evaluation framework for screen, measuring whether it is seen, celebrated, remembered, taught, credited, preserved, remunerated and culturally valued over time.

Australia already has substantial public screen and cultural infrastructure: national and state screen agencies, public broadcasters, training institutions, archives, education systems, regulators, libraries, festivals, cultural venues, guilds and collecting societies. The next policy should connect these assets more deliberately into a coherent screen ecology.

ADG and ASDACS together represent the full lifecycle of directing. ADG is critical cultural and workforce infrastructure for directors, representing them as creative workers, professional practitioners, cultural leaders and industrial participants. ASDACS represents directors as audiovisual authors and rights-holders whose works generate ongoing secondary value in Australia and internationally. The organisations are legally and operationally distinct, but together they reveal the policy continuum that directors need: professional representation before and during production, and rights infrastructure after production.

ADG and ASDACS are undertaking renewal work to ensure directors' infrastructure is properly governed, financially disciplined, rights-aware, evidence-informed and member-facing. The submission therefore proceeds from a position of accountability: we are fixing ourselves. The policy point is that organisational renewal and cultural policy reform need to work together. Representative bodies must be effective and accountable, but they also need a policy environment that recognises their role in sustaining creative careers.

Australia has now legislated the first phase of streaming regulation.[2] The next policy task is to ensure implementation delivers public value beyond expenditure: Australian creative careers, rights protections, cultural availability, audience connection, metadata integrity and a continuing life for Australian works after commissioning.

This submission proposes an Australian Screen Culture and Audience Infrastructure Strategy. By cultural availability, we mean the practical ability of audiences, educators, researchers and cultural institutions to locate, access, contextualise and lawfully use Australian screen works over time. Rather than relying on hard platform discoverability obligations alone, Australia should build audience connection infrastructure around Australian screen works: accurate metadata, catalogue availability

reporting, school collections, creator-led audience programs, public-interest access pathways after commercial windows, NFSA and archive partnerships, and a national "where to watch Australian screen" portal that helps audiences, educators and researchers locate Australian works through legal viewing pathways.

The next National Cultural Policy is being developed at the same time as major decisions about artificial intelligence, copyright, Screen Australia, workforce capacity and public cultural infrastructure. The consultation paper recognises that digital tools and platforms are changing how creative work is produced, distributed and discovered, raising questions about authenticity, rights and fair remuneration. It also recognises changing audience behaviour, youth participation in digital environments and the importance of resilient cultural infrastructure.[3]

If directors' authorship, rights and representative infrastructure are not built into these reforms now, Australia risks reproducing in the platform and AI era the same imbalance that characterised earlier screen policy settings: works are supported, platforms are regulated, producers are recognised, but audiovisual authors remain structurally under-recognised.

Priority asks

ADG and ASDACS identify the following priority reforms for the next National Cultural Policy.

- Recognise directors, alongside writers, as audiovisual authors and central creative leaders in Australian screen culture.
- Treat sustainable directing careers as a cultural policy objective, including action on income volatility, unpaid development labour, career discontinuity, weak bargaining power and limited access to leave.
- Develop statutory and collectively managed remuneration mechanisms for audiovisual authors, including directors, where appropriate and through practical collective administration.
- Recognise ASDACS and collecting societies as rights infrastructure that supports creator income, attribution, data integrity, international royalty pathways and dispute resolution.
- Establish a Screen Authorship Levy, Screen Core Contribution Fund or equivalent recurrent infrastructure mechanism for screen authorship and craft.
- Recognise authorship and craft guilds, including ADG, as cultural and workforce infrastructure.
- Implement and evaluate the Australian Content Requirement so it builds Australian creative capacity, not only Australian content volume.
- Modernise the Broadcasting Services Act and related audiovisual regulation so that cultural obligations apply according to function, scale and market impact, rather than legacy delivery technology.
- Establish an Australian Screen Culture and Audience Infrastructure Strategy to support cultural availability, public value after commissioning, schools access, public-interest access pathways, creator-led audience development, national screen intelligence, and a national “where to watch Australian screen” portal, building on the work of ACMI, NFSA and other screen culture institutions.
- Adopt a ‘measures of success’ framework that factors in cultural impact, audience connection, creative careers, authorship, long-tail access, education use, public memory, rights income, regional reach, creative ambition, international reputation and creator remuneration.
- Strengthen credit, attribution, metadata, moral rights and AI protections based on consent, transparency, attribution, remuneration and enforceable safeguards.

- Fund paid, credit-bearing career pathways and distinguish access from progression.
- Support practical rights, credit, contract and AI education for directors.
- Support better workforce data and evidence partnerships with representative bodies.
- Ensure public development funding and commissioning frameworks properly value directors' creative labour.
- Rename the Producer Offset as the Production Offset to better reflect the full ecology public subsidy is intended to support.

Recommendations

A. Screen authorship, rights and remuneration

Recommendation 1: Recognise directors, alongside writers, as audiovisual authors.

The next National Cultural Policy should explicitly recognise directors and writers as principal audiovisual authors within Australian screen culture. Directors are not interchangeable service providers, but central creative leaders whose decisions shape the meaning, form and audience experience of screen works. This recognition should be reflected in cultural policy, Screen Australia settings, public funding frameworks, copyright reform, AI policy, metadata requirements and remuneration mechanisms.

Producers are essential production, financing and exploitation partners. Directors and writers are the principal creative authors whose work shapes the final audiovisual form. A mature screen policy framework should recognise these distinct roles.

Recommendation 2: Develop statutory and collectively managed remuneration rights for audiovisual authors.

The Australian Government should examine and implement mechanisms through which audiovisual authors, including directors, can receive fair remuneration from the use of their works.

This should include consideration of streaming, broadcast, retransmission, educational use, institutional use, public communication, international exploitation, AI licensing and other secondary uses. The mechanism should be practical, collective and administratively efficient.

Internationally, the EU Copyright in the Digital Single Market Directive establishes a principle of appropriate and proportionate remuneration for authors and performers when they license or transfer rights.[4] The Directors Guild of America residuals framework demonstrates that downstream remuneration for directors and directorial teams can be part of a mature screen market, although the legal mechanism is different from the model Australia may choose.[5]

Recommendation 3: Recognise and support ASDACS and collecting societies as creator-rights infrastructure.

The next National Cultural Policy should recognise collecting societies, including ASDACS, as essential infrastructure within the Australian screen ecology.

ASDACS supports directors across the life of their works. It depends on accurate credits, reliable metadata, functioning international agreements and the ability to identify, collect and distribute remuneration to the correct director. In the streaming and AI era, this infrastructure will become more important, not less.

Government should work with ASDACS and relevant collecting societies to strengthen audiovisual authorship data, improve royalty pathways, support rights education, and ensure directors are included in future remuneration and licensing systems.

This should include review of education, government and institutional uses of audiovisual works. Australian screen works are used in classrooms, universities, public institutions, libraries, cultural programs, public-sector communications and government contexts. Australia already accepts, through mechanisms such as Public Lending Right and Educational Lending Right, that public access to cultural works can coexist with creator remuneration.[6] The same principle should be applied more consistently to audiovisual authors.

Recommendation 4: Strengthen credit, attribution, metadata, moral rights and AI protections.

The next National Cultural Policy should recognise credit, attribution, metadata and moral rights as practical rights infrastructure.

Director credit is not merely symbolic. It is the mechanism through which cultural recognition, professional opportunity, moral rights, royalty distribution and historical record are maintained. Publicly funded productions, broadcasters, streamers, distributors and education/institutional users should be required to preserve accurate director credits and authorship metadata at title, episode and work level.

AI policy should protect directors and other audiovisual authors through consent, transparency, attribution, metadata preservation and remuneration, building on the Government's stated position that it is not considering a text and data mining exception in Australian copyright law.[20] For directors, AI is not only a technology issue. It is an authorship, attribution, moral rights and cultural integrity issue. Generative AI may be used to analyse, imitate, reproduce or distort elements of a director's creative work, name, likeness, credit or professional identity. Policy settings must ensure that directors' work and identity are not used to train, generate or commercially exploit AI outputs without consent, transparency, attribution and fair remuneration.

AI safeguards should also protect against uses that imitate or commercially exploit recognisable elements of a director's work or professional identity in ways that may damage reputation or falsely imply involvement. AI regulation should include strong safeguards for First Nations cultural authority, ICIP, language, story, image and knowledge.

B. Creator-side infrastructure

Recommendation 5: Establish a Screen Authorship Levy, Screen Core Contribution Fund or equivalent recurrent infrastructure mechanism.

The Government should establish a recurring funding mechanism for screen authorship and craft infrastructure.

This could take the form of a Screen Authorship Levy, a Screen Core Contribution Fund, or a Screen Authorship and Craft Infrastructure Fund. The precise design can be developed through consultation, but the principle should be settled in the next National Cultural Policy: the organisations representing screen authors and craft practitioners require stable, recurrent infrastructure funding.

Screen Producers Australia's published Production Levies Statement confirms that producer-side infrastructure is supported through a recurring production levy, calculated at 0.25 per cent of eligible production budget expenditure for productions above \$500,000, and treated as QAPE for the purpose of the Producer Offset. SPA collected \$1,496,585 in compulsory levy revenue for the year ended 30 June 2025.[13]

The point is not simply that SPA has a levy. It's that the existing production finance and offset architecture can accommodate production-linked expenditure of this kind. Division 376 of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997* establishes the Producer Offset, Location Offset and PDV Offset, and provides for qualifying Australian production expenditure to be assessed under each scheme. The legislation does not appear to reserve the principle of production-linked industry infrastructure expenditure to producer-side organisations. The current imbalance is that SPA has an established mechanism through which payment is normalised and collected, while directors, writers and screen craft bodies do not.

The policy task is to ensure that screen authorship and craft infrastructure are not left outside a model that already supports producer-side representation.

The mechanism should draw on relevant domestic and international precedents, including existing producer-side infrastructure mechanisms, UK ScreenSkills-style production contributions,[14] international guild, skills and collectively bargained contribution models, and the Commonwealth's

own recognition through Music Australia, Writing Australia, First Nations Arts and Creative Workplaces that cultural sectors require standing infrastructure, not just project funding. Revive established Creative Australia, Music Australia, Writing Australia, Creative Workplaces and First Nations Arts as part of a broader shift toward standing cultural infrastructure.[7]

The precise mechanism could be settled through consultation, but should be designed to apply, where appropriate, to qualifying publicly supported or offset-supported productions, including those accessing the Producer Offset, Location Offset or PDV Offset, subject to statutory requirements. It could be administered through Screen Australia or another suitable arm's-length entity, or designed as a broader fund supported by public investment, industry contributions, platform obligations or a combination of mechanisms.

Recommendation 6: Fund a Screen Authorship and Craft Guilds structure, with ADG recognised as critical cultural and workforce infrastructure.

The next National Cultural Policy should establish or support a funded screen authorship and craft guilds structure. This structure should provide government with a standing, organised and properly resourced means of engaging directly with working directors, writers and screen craft practitioners. It should not rely on unpaid labour, occasional consultation or the capacity of already under-resourced guilds to subsidise sector-wide work.

ADG should be recognised as critical cultural and workforce infrastructure for Australian screen directors. It is the national body through which directors receive professional support, industrial guidance, career development, policy representation, standards work, peer connection and advocacy. ADG's own strategic priorities include minimum employment standards, best-practice contracts, rate cards, directors' rights education, career pathways, attachments and placements, mentoring, cultural policy advocacy, copyright, streamer regulation, AI, research, and partnerships with educational institutions, broadcasters, streamers and screen agencies.[8]

The broader structure should include multi-year core support for authorship guilds, particularly ADG and AWG, and smaller capped support for craft guilds, recognising their essential but differently scaled infrastructure needs. It should include a built-in administration and coordination function.

This would be consistent with the way governments in other sectors rely on recognised and resourced representative bodies for consultation, workforce intelligence, standards development and implementation support. Screen authorship and craft practitioners should have equivalent infrastructure.

Recommendation 7: Support practical rights, credit, contract and AI education for directors.

Alongside longer-term legal reform, there is an immediate need for practical rights, credit and contract education for directors. Cultural policy should support sector-wide resources that help directors understand contract terms, minimum standards, credit rights, moral rights, AI clauses, residuals, secondary remuneration and dispute pathways.

This would reduce information asymmetry and improve the quality of negotiations across the sector. It is a practical, fundable measure that could be delivered through ADG, ASDACS and partner organisations.

C. Screen careers and pathways**Recommendation 8: Treat sustainable directing careers as a cultural policy objective.**

Sustainable directing careers should be treated as a cultural policy objective. If only those who can absorb income volatility, unpaid development work and long gaps between commissions can remain in the profession, Australian screen culture will lose talent, diversity and creative depth.

Recent ADG/ASDACS member evidence indicates that many Australian screen directors are working in conditions that are incompatible with long-term career sustainability. One in three surveyed directors earned less than \$50,000 per year; 58 per cent undertook work outside screen directing to supplement their income; only 22 per cent had access to personal or sick leave; and more than two-thirds worked sporadically or on a non-continuous basis. [15] This is member evidence, not a whole-of-industry statistical survey, but it is a significant indication of the pressures facing directors.

Recommendation 9: Fund paid, credit-bearing director pathways and distinguish access from progression.

The next National Cultural Policy should support paid, structured and accountable director pathways across the screen sector.

This should include director attachments, shadowing, second-unit opportunities, episode opportunities, mid-career acceleration, documentary director support, children's television pathways, animation director pathways, First Nations director pathways, regional pathways and opportunities connected to inbound production where appropriate.

Cultural policy should distinguish between access and progression. Entry-level initiatives, attachments and mentoring are valuable, but do not necessarily build sustainable careers. The critical pathway gap for directors is progression: from early promise to paid credit, from credit to repeat commissioning, and from emerging status to professional continuity.

Publicly supported pathway programs should be assessed by outcomes. Measures should include paid credits, repeat work, retention, advancement and improved access for First Nations directors, culturally diverse directors, disabled directors, regional practitioners, mid-career directors and other underrepresented groups.

The Production Infrastructure and Capacity Analysis (PICA) report supports the need to connect training to real workforce outcomes. It notes the inherent challenge of teaching screen production in a classroom environment, that some lessons become clear only once practitioners enter the workforce, and that screen-specific university pathways are concentrated in established east-coast production hubs.[9]

Any reform or strengthening of Screen Australia should include substantial professional expertise from directors and writers in governance and advisory structures, and formal, resourced advisory relationships with authorship and craft guilds.

Recommendation 10: Ensure public development funding properly values directors' creative labour.

A significant amount of directors' creative labour occurs before production is financed or formally contracted. Development, pitching, tone-setting, visual research, casting conversations, script conversations, project maintenance and creative preparation can involve substantial unpaid or underpaid work.

Public development funding should recognise the director's creative labour earlier and more consistently. Where directors are attached to publicly supported projects, funding settings should encourage fair payment for development, preparation and creative contribution, rather than assuming this work can be absorbed unpaid.

Unpaid development labour narrows the profession to those who can afford to carry risk, weakening diversity, regional access, mid-career sustainability and the quality of Australian screen development.

D. Audience, institutions and cultural life

Recommendation 11: Establish an Australian Screen Culture and Audience Infrastructure Strategy.

The next National Cultural Policy should establish an Australian Screen Culture and Audience Infrastructure Strategy to ensure Australian works have a cultural life beyond commissioning.

By cultural availability, we mean the practical ability of audiences, educators, researchers and cultural institutions to locate, access, contextualise, discuss and lawfully use Australian screen works over time.

The strategy should rebuild the weakened connective infrastructure between production finance, formal education, audience development, cultural memory and long-term cultural impact. It should include rights-cleared school and library access; a national “where to watch Australian screen” access and metadata portal; creator-led audience development; screen literacy initiatives; criticism and screen journalism; festivals and awards as audience-development infrastructure; public-interest access pathways; research and data infrastructure; and partnerships with NFSA, ACMI, public broadcasters, education bodies, libraries, festivals, cinemas, guilds, collecting societies and cultural institutions.

It should also support a dedicated creator-led low-budget and development stream, informed by the AFC legacy, for director/writer-led work, first and second features, documentary, experimental work, animation and culturally significant projects that may not fit conventional financing models.

The strategy should recognise that Australian screen culture now includes film, television, documentary, children’s content, animation, online-first work, games, interactive media, VR/AR and creator-led global audience models. These should not be treated as separate silos where they contribute to Australian screen culture, audience development, creative pathways and cultural memory.

The strategy should include a more complete evaluation framework for Australian screen culture, measuring not only production volume, expenditure and commissions, but also cultural impact, public discourse, education use, long-tail access, career launch and progression, rights income, creator remuneration, regional reach, international reputation, creative risk and the development of distinctive Australian voices.

This approach should be developed as a partnership model using existing institutions and legal viewing pathways, rather than as a new standalone agency. It would complement, rather than burden, the Australian Content Requirement, while ensuring Australian screen works have meaningful public value beyond the moment of commissioning.

Recommendation 12: Strengthen documentary, children's content, screen education, First Nations creative authority and cultural safety.

The next National Cultural Policy should give specific attention to culturally essential but structurally vulnerable forms, including documentary and children's screen content.

Documentary records lived experience, supports First Nations truth-telling, preserves social and historical memory, strengthens public understanding and allows Australian audiences to encounter the complexity of their own communities.

Australian children's screen content should be treated as foundational cultural infrastructure. Revive cited the Australian Children's Television Foundation's view that Australian children's screen content is "truly nation building" because it allows children to see their lives reflected on screen and imagine possibilities for themselves.[10] The Government should support the commissioning, cultural availability, accessibility and retention of Australian children's content across public broadcasting, streaming, education and digital platforms.

Strong public broadcasters, including ABC, SBS and NITV, should be recognised as essential screen infrastructure for documentary, children's content, First Nations storytelling, regional reach, audience connection and creative workforce development.

The policy should establish a stronger national approach to screen education and audience connection, including curated Australian screen collections for schools, teaching resources, education licensing arrangements that recognise audiovisual authors, and partnerships between screen agencies, education departments, public broadcasters, archives, libraries, festivals, guilds and collecting societies.

First Nations First should be embedded across screen policy. The next National Cultural Policy should support First Nations directors, storytellers, communities and cultural authorities to control how their stories, images, languages, knowledge, histories and cultural materials are created, attributed, accessed, reused and protected.

Publicly supported productions and institutions should be expected to demonstrate culturally safe practice, fair crediting, meaningful creative participation and progression outcomes.

E. System settings**Recommendation 13: Implement, evaluate and complete audiovisual reform following passage of the Australian Content Requirement.**

The Government has now legislated an Australian Content Requirement for major subscription video-on-demand services. ADG and ASDACS welcome this reform. The next task is to ensure the framework delivers cultural outcomes beyond expenditure.

Implementation and evaluation should consider whether streamer investment supports Australian directors, writers and creative teams; whether Australian works remain culturally available; whether credits and metadata are preserved; whether documentary, children's, arts and educational programs are supported; whether First Nations and underrepresented directors progress into paid credits; and whether platform investment contributes to sustainable Australian creative careers and meaningful connection with Australian audiences.

The legislation should be treated as the floor, not the ceiling, of audiovisual policy. Future reform should remain platform-neutral and capable of addressing major audiovisual services according to function, scale and market impact. This should include consideration of whether the Broadcasting Services Act and related audiovisual regulation should be modernised so that cultural obligations are not limited by legacy distinctions between broadcast, subscription, on-demand and platform delivery. A modernised definition of broadcast, audiovisual service or regulated audiovisual service could support coherent future obligations around transparency, reporting, Australian content, rights protections, metadata, public value after commissioning and potential downstream remuneration mechanisms.

Recommendation 14: Rename the Producer Offset as the Production Offset and align public/private investment with public value.

The purpose of the Offset is broader than support for producers as a class. It is to support Australian production activity, Australian employment, Australian creative leadership, Australian stories, Australian cultural outcomes, private investment, industry capacity and Australian audiences.

A Production Offset would better reflect the whole ecology that public subsidy is intended to sustain. It would also sit more coherently with a Screen Authorship Levy or Screen Core Contribution mechanism, making clear that public production support should contribute to a balanced screen ecosystem.

The Government should also encourage private, philanthropic and social impact investment into Australian screen culture, including development, production, distribution, audience development, documentary, children's content, First Nations storytelling, animation, impact distribution and emerging digital forms. These mechanisms should complement public funding and tax incentives, not replace them, and should include safeguards for Australian creative leadership, fair remuneration, credit and metadata integrity, rights transparency, appropriate recoupment structures, cultural purpose and creator participation in downstream value.

Part 2: Main submission

About ADG and ASDACS

The Australian Directors' Guild is the national professional association and industrial voice for Australian screen directors. ADG represents directors working across feature film, television drama, documentary, animation, online content, commercials and emerging audiovisual forms. Its work includes advocacy, industrial representation, professional development, career pathways, contract and rate guidance, mentorship, events, awards, member support and policy engagement.

ADG should be regarded as critical cultural and workforce infrastructure. It is the national body through which directors receive professional support, industrial guidance, career development, policy representation, standards work, peer connection and advocacy. Without a properly resourced ADG, government and industry lack a stable national mechanism for engaging with directors as the creative leaders and audiovisual authors of Australian screen works.

ASDACS is the Australian Screen Directors Authorship Collecting Society. It collects and distributes royalties and secondary income for screen directors through reciprocal arrangements with international collecting societies and domestic rights pathways where available. ASDACS represents directors as audiovisual authors and rights-holders whose work continues to generate cultural and economic value after production.

ADG supports directors as creative workers, professional practitioners and cultural leaders at the point of creation and production. ASDACS supports directors as audiovisual authors whose works continue to circulate, generate value, require attribution and give rise to remuneration claims long after production has ended.

This combined perspective is important. Australian screen policy too often treats production as the endpoint. For directors, production is only one point in the life of a work. A director's contribution extends from development and preparation through production, post-production, release, broadcast, streaming, educational use, international circulation, archival life, AI reuse and secondary remuneration.

ADG and ASDACS are also undertaking renewal work to ensure directors' infrastructure is fit for purpose: properly governed, financially disciplined, rights-aware, evidence-informed, member-facing and able to support both cultural ambition and industrial fairness. ADG is not asking cultural policy to substitute for organisational responsibility. It is taking responsibility for its own renewal. The policy point is that organisational renewal and cultural policy reform need to work together. Representative bodies must be effective and accountable, but they also need a policy environment that recognises their role in sustaining creative careers.

The next National Cultural Policy should recognise this full lifecycle.

The policy problem: production volume alone is not cultural strength

The next National Cultural Policy should do far more than aim to maintain an industry. It should aim to build a renewed Australian screen culture: confident in its own stories, ambitious for its audiences, fair to its creators, and capable of generating cultural and economic value over the long term.

Production volume, expenditure, jobs during production, leverage of private finance, festival selection, box office or sales, international attraction activity and platform commissions are tracked consistently. These indicators matter, but they do not fully measure cultural strength.

Cultural policy should also measure cultural impact, audience connection, creative careers, long-tail access, educational use, public memory, rights income, creative ambition, regional reach and the development of distinctive Australian voices.

The next National Cultural Policy should adopt a more complete evaluation framework for screen, measuring not only how much Australian content is made, but whether Australian works are seen, celebrated, remembered, taught, credited, preserved, remunerated and culturally valued over time.

A screen sector can be busy and still be fragile. It can attract international production while failing to sustain Australian creative authorship. It can generate expenditure while leaving directors, writers and other practitioners with insecure careers. It can deliver content to platforms while failing to ensure Australian audiences can meaningfully connect with Australian work. It can produce works that circulate for decades while the creators of those works receive little or no ongoing remuneration.

The next policy should therefore move from a production-volume model to a full screen-culture model.

A full screen-culture model asks whether Australian screen works are being authored by Australian creative leaders; whether directors and writers can build sustainable careers; whether screen authors are properly credited, attributed and remunerated; whether rights, metadata and royalty systems are fit for streaming, AI and international exploitation; whether education, government and institutional licensing systems recognise audiovisual authors; whether Australian works remain culturally available after commissioning; whether children, young people, First Nations audiences, regional communities and diverse communities see themselves in Australian screen culture; whether private and philanthropic investment settings strengthen Australian creative leadership rather than weakening creator rights; whether public investments support long-term creative capacity, not only individual productions; and whether the organisations that represent creators are properly resourced to do the work government increasingly asks of them.

These questions are central to cultural policy.

International experience reinforces this point. Successful national screen cultures have coherent systems that connect creative leadership, public institutions, talent development, audience strategy, export, rights, private investment and long-term industry capacity. Denmark and South Korea provide different but useful lessons: Denmark in public institutions, talent development and audience trust in a smaller market; South Korea in coordinated cultural-industrial strategy, export ambition and cross-platform content ecosystems.

Public institutions and the wider screen ecology

The next National Cultural Policy should connect public screen and cultural infrastructure more deliberately into a coherent screen ecology.

Agencies support development, production and sector capacity. Public broadcasters remain central to Australian storytelling, documentary, children's content, First Nations content, regional reach, public access and creative workforce development. ABC, SBS and NITV perform functions that commercial and global platform markets will not reliably provide on their own: commissioning culturally significant Australian works, taking creative risks, reaching audiences nationally, supporting independent producers and creative teams, and maintaining a public-interest relationship with Australian audiences.

Training institutions support craft formation and professional development. Archives and public collecting institutions preserve audiovisual memory and access. Schools, universities, libraries, festivals and cultural venues connect works with audiences. Regulators and collecting societies support fair, accountable and rights-aware systems.

Screen culture infrastructure also includes cinemas, festivals, cinematheques, libraries, screen journalism, criticism, community media, filmmaking initiatives, games and interactive storytelling. These are not peripheral to screen policy. They help Australian works reach audiences, enter public discourse, build screen literacy, launch careers and remain part of cultural memory.

Ensuring that Australia's existing public institutions and sector bodies are better connected with screen authorship, director pathways, audience development, cultural memory, rights infrastructure and public value is central to fixing an increasingly fragmented screen ecology. Production, training, audience development, rights management, education, archive, audiovisual regulation and cultural memory are often treated as separate policy domains. For directors and audiences, they are not separate. They are part of the same cultural system.

Directors as audiovisual authors and creative workers

The director's role is not simply to manage a set but to interpret, shape and unify the elements of an audiovisual work. Directors work with writers, actors, cinematographers, editors, designers, composers, producers and crews to create the final screen experience. They make decisions that shape performance, image, rhythm, sound, tone, structure, meaning and audience impact.

Despite this, Australian screen policy has not consistently recognised directors as audiovisual authors.

Authorship is the basis for recognition, credit, reputation, moral rights, remuneration, career progression and cultural memory. If directors are treated only as hired production labour, the system undervalues the role they play in shaping Australian culture.

Directors are artists and authors, but they are also workers.

Most Australian directors work project to project. Their income is irregular, their bargaining power is often limited, and their capacity to negotiate fair terms varies significantly depending on career stage, genre, platform, budget, geography and production context. Many directors carry long unpaid development periods, deferred fees, speculative labour, reputational risk and career uncertainty.

As one director stated in ADG/ASDACS member evidence: [15]

"Pay is inadequate, conditions are very taxing, we work too many hours for free and are forced to sign away all rights to our work, as well as being pressured into unfair terms and contracts."

Cultural policy should recognise freelance screen work as a structural feature of the industry, not an exception. Policy responses should address income volatility, unpaid or underpaid development labour, career discontinuity, burnout, limited access to leave and the power imbalance between individual directors and commissioning or production entities.

A policy that recognises directors as authors but does not address working conditions would be incomplete. Conversely, a policy that treats directors only as workers and does not recognise authorship would also be incomplete.

Directors need both.

Development labour and the hidden work of directing

A significant amount of directors' creative labour occurs before production is financed or formally contracted.

Development, pitching, tone-setting, visual research, casting conversations, script conversations, project maintenance and creative preparation can involve substantial unpaid or underpaid work. This labour often shapes whether a project can attract finance, talent, audience confidence and production support. Yet it is frequently treated as speculative, invisible or absorbable by individual freelancers.

Cultural policy should recognise this hidden labour and support funding and contracting settings that reduce unpaid development burden, particularly for freelance directors without institutional backing.

Where directors are attached to publicly supported projects, funding settings should encourage fair payment for development, preparation and creative contribution, rather than assuming this work can be absorbed unpaid.

Rights, remuneration, ASDACS and collective management

Collective rights management is cultural infrastructure.

It is the system through which creators can be identified, works can be tracked, royalties can be collected, international income can be distributed, and creators can receive remuneration that would be impossible to negotiate or administer individually.

For screen directors, this infrastructure is especially important because audiovisual works have long lives. A film or television episode may be broadcast, streamed, retransmitted, screened in educational settings, reused in archives, distributed internationally, made available on platforms, licensed into institutional contexts, extracted into clips, used in AI datasets or circulated in ways not contemplated when the director was first engaged.

No individual director can track all of this alone.

ASDACS exists to perform this function for directors. It connects Australian and New Zealand directors to international royalty systems and reciprocal collecting society arrangements. It helps ensure that where rights and remuneration exist, directors can be identified and paid.

Collecting societies are an important part of cultural infrastructure because they help creators access income that would otherwise be missed, particularly where rights are complex, cross-border or dependent on accurate attribution. For directors, rights administration, credit integrity, evidence gathering and dispute resolution all contribute to career sustainability and professional recognition. As one director stated: [15]

"Somehow ASDACS has managed to get me funds the production company worked hard to deprive me of. The money is always helpful - I'm just a working director and writer - but it's also that sense that they didn't completely screw me over."

Australian directors often receive royalties from overseas jurisdictions because other countries recognise audiovisual authorship and collective remuneration more clearly than Australia does. This means Australian directors may receive income from foreign rights systems while having limited equivalent rights at home.

Australian policy should ask why they remain under-recognised domestically. If collective remuneration works internationally, Australian policy should ask how comparable mechanisms can be implemented here.

Contract alone is not sufficient to secure fair remuneration for audiovisual authors. Directors usually negotiate terms before the full value of a work is known. They often negotiate under unequal bargaining conditions. Future exploitation pathways may not yet exist or may be difficult to price. Streaming success, international sales, educational use, long-tail platform availability, archival reuse and AI-related licensing can all generate value well beyond the original production fee.

A one-off fee does not adequately capture this continuing value.

Secondary remuneration should not be treated as a windfall. For freelance screen directors, it can be part of the income architecture that makes creative work viable across sporadic and project-based employment.

A statutory remuneration right for audiovisual authors would not need to disrupt production financing or individual contractual arrangements. It could be designed as a collectively managed right, administered through collecting societies, with clear rules about eligible uses, collection mechanisms, distribution data and interaction with existing rights-holders.

Education, government and institutional licensing

Education, government and institutional uses of audiovisual works should be reviewed to ensure directors are properly recognised and remunerated.

Australian screen works are used in classrooms, universities, public institutions, libraries, cultural programs, public-sector communications and government contexts. They are screened, copied, communicated, excerpted, embedded in teaching resources, used in public education campaigns and preserved in institutional collections.

At present, directors are not always adequately included in licensing and remuneration for these uses. This is inconsistent with broader cultural policy principles.

Australia already accepts, through Public Lending Right, Educational Lending Right and collective licensing arrangements, that public access to cultural works can coexist with creator remuneration. The same principle should be applied more consistently to audiovisual authors.[6]

The next National Cultural Policy should ensure audiovisual authors are included in statutory and government licensing schemes wherever their works are copied, communicated, screened or otherwise used. This should include attention to accurate crediting, work-level and episode-level metadata, and practical collective administration through appropriate collecting societies.

Credit, metadata, moral rights and AI

For directors, credit is the foundation of reputation, career progression, moral rights, cultural availability, audience recognition, royalty distribution and historical record. A director's credit determines how they are found, how they are evaluated, how their work is remembered and how remuneration systems connect them to works.

If director metadata is inaccurate, incomplete or stripped from works, directors lose recognition and income. If episode-level credits are not properly captured, television directors can disappear from rights systems. If platforms display incomplete or inconsistent credits, audience recognition and professional attribution are weakened. If works are used in AI systems without preserving authorship metadata, the original creative contribution becomes harder to trace and remunerate.

For directors, moral rights are practical, economic and cultural protections. Policy settings should protect attribution and integrity, including where works are altered, reused, promoted, fragmented, algorithmically generated or associated with a director without consent.

The next National Cultural Policy should require publicly funded productions, broadcasters, streamers, distributors, educational licensing systems and public cultural institutions to maintain accurate authorship metadata at title, episode and work level. These requirements should be built into funding agreements, delivery specifications, licensing arrangements, platform reporting obligations and archive systems.

National audiovisual memory and access infrastructure, including NFSA and public collecting institutions, should be connected to this work so that Australian screen works are preserved, attributed, culturally available and connected to their creators over time.

AI intensifies the need to recognise directors as audiovisual authors.

Australian screen works are valuable not only as finished cultural works, but as training material, reference material, stylistic material, performance material, visual material and data. They may also contain the images, voices, stories and cultural materials of real people and communities.

For directors, AI is an authorship, attribution, moral rights and cultural integrity issue. Policy settings must ensure that directors' work and identity are not used to train, generate or commercially exploit AI outputs without consent, transparency, attribution and fair remuneration.

AI policy must protect against uses that falsely imply a director's involvement, imitate or commercially exploit recognisable elements of a director's work or professional identity in ways that damage professional reputation, undermine credit or moral rights, or remove authorship metadata.

The Australian Government has stated that it is not considering a text and data mining exception in Australian copyright law.[20] ADG and ASDACS welcome that position. The next task is to ensure that any future AI and copyright framework does not permit uncompensated extraction by another route. Audiovisual works should not be used commercially for AI training, generation, style imitation, synthetic production or related machine-learning purposes without consent, transparency, attribution and fair remuneration. Any licensing or collective administration model must ensure that revenue flows to the creators and workers whose labour is being used, including directors as audiovisual authors, and not only to corporate rightsholders.

Collective licensing may have an important role to play. If AI companies seek to use large bodies of audiovisual works, collective mechanisms may be the most practical way to administer consent, remuneration and distribution. But such systems will only work if directors are recognised as audiovisual authors and if credit and metadata systems are robust.

AI safeguards should be embedded in funding agreements, production agreements, commissioning frameworks and platform obligations.

AI policy must also include strong safeguards for First Nations cultural authority, ICIP, language, story, image, knowledge and cultural material.

Structural parity and screen authorship infrastructure

As this submission has argued, Australia has not established equivalent infrastructure to support screen authorship. Producer-side infrastructure has access to recurring support mechanisms. Director-side, writer-side and craft-side infrastructure do not.

Comparable principles already operate in other parts of Australian cultural policy, however. Music Australia, Writing Australia, First Nations Arts and Creative Workplaces reflect the Commonwealth's

recognition that cultural sectors require standing infrastructure, not only project-by-project support. Public Lending Right, Educational Lending Right and collective licensing arrangements demonstrate that public access to cultural works can sit alongside creator remuneration.[7]

Internationally, mature screen jurisdictions use different mechanisms to support creator remuneration and career infrastructure. European frameworks recognise appropriate and proportionate remuneration principles for authors and performers. [4] DGA residuals demonstrate that downstream remuneration for directors and directorial teams can be part of a mature screen market, even where the legal mechanism is collective bargaining rather than statute. [5] Production-linked skills contributions also provide useful precedent. UK ScreenSkills' High-end TV Skills Fund supports training and career development through production contributions.[14]

The next National Cultural Policy should adapt the best available precedents to Australian conditions: production-linked contributions, collective management, statutory remuneration where appropriate, stronger guild infrastructure, public-interest licensing, and platform obligations that recognise the real value created by audiovisual authors.

The organisations representing screen authors and craft practitioners are expected to provide policy input, career development, workforce intelligence, industrial guidance, rights education, consultation, standards work and member support through fragile memberships, intermittent grants, sponsorships, underpaid labour and volunteer effort.

That is not sustainable, nor is it efficient for government.

ADG's recent organisational fragility reinforces this broader point. The fact that Australia's only dedicated national representative body for screen directors has had to rebuild its capacity is a warning sign about the under-resourcing of director representation in Australia. Directors are central to Australian screen culture, yet the infrastructure that supports their rights, standards, career pathways and advocacy has been expected to operate with limited and inconsistent resources.

If producer-side infrastructure can be supported through recurring mechanisms, and if the offset architecture can accommodate production-linked expenditure of this kind, screen authorship infrastructure should not be left to chance.

The next National Cultural Policy should establish equivalent, complementary infrastructure for directors, writers and screen craft practitioners. This could be achieved through a Screen Authorship Levy, a Screen Core Contribution Fund, or a Screen Authorship and Craft Infrastructure Fund. The design can be settled through consultation. The principle should be settled now.

A Screen Authorship Levy or Screen Core Contribution mechanism

A Screen Authorship Levy or Screen Core Contribution mechanism should be designed to complement, not replace, existing producer-side, agency and union infrastructure. It could be administered through Screen Australia or another suitable arm's-length structure, or designed as a broader fund supported by public investment, industry contributions, platform obligations or a combination of mechanisms.

The mechanism could apply to qualifying publicly supported or offset-supported productions and be recognised within production budgets where appropriate, including across productions accessing the Producer Offset, Location Offset or PDV Offset.

The key design principles should be that funding is recurrent rather than one-off; supports core infrastructure rather than only projects; prioritises screen authorship organisations, particularly directors and writers; includes support for craft guilds, scaled appropriately to their size and function; includes an administration and coordination component; is accountable, transparent and tied to public-interest functions; supports national service delivery; strengthens government's access to practitioner expertise; and aligns with existing agencies while avoiding duplication.

An effective mechanism would enable ADG and other guilds to provide services that the sector already needs: standard contracts, rate guidance, rights education, AI and copyright literacy, career pathways, mentorship, state chapter support, member advice, fair work resources, industry standards, research, policy consultation, cross-guild coordination and public-facing audience and career initiatives.

Screen authorship and craft guild infrastructure

Australia needs a funded screen authorship and craft guild structure.

Whether advanced through a separate joint guild submission or through this submission, ADG and ASDACS support the establishment of a standing, resourced mechanism through which government can engage directly with working directors, writers and craft practitioners.

Authorship and craft guilds perform a translation function between government, industry and working practitioners, identifying pressure points, gathering evidence from members, developing practical standards, supporting rights education and helping translate policy into industry behaviour. Without this infrastructure, directors' interests are more likely to be addressed late, inconsistently or primarily through the lens of better-resourced parts of the sector.

This is not unusual in public policy. Governments routinely rely on organised, resourced industry and practitioner bodies for consultation, standards development, workforce intelligence, implementation advice and sector coordination. In areas such as agriculture, health, education, sport and the broader arts, recognised representative structures help government understand day-to-day practice and design policy that can be implemented effectively.

Resourcing screen authorship and craft bodies would be an investment in a better-functioning screen industry. It would support better policy, stronger implementation, more constructive industry relationships and a more sustainable creative workforce.

This structure's core funding pool should be specifically reserved for screen authorship and craft organisations, rather than producer organisations or broad industrial unions, because its purpose is to rebalance policy input and infrastructure toward those whose voices are often under-resourced.

A funded authorship and craft structure would allow more effective collaboration as properly resourced guilds are better partners for producers, agencies, unions, broadcasters, streamers, educators and government.

Alongside longer-term legal reform, there is an immediate need for practical rights, credit and contract education for directors. Cultural policy should support sector-wide resources that help directors understand contract terms, minimum standards, credit rights, moral rights, AI clauses, residuals, secondary remuneration and dispute pathways.

There is also a need for better national data on directing careers, including income patterns, gaps between commissions, access to paid development, progression from attachments to credits, repeat commissioning, secondary remuneration and the impact of AI and streaming on creative labour. Cultural policy should support partnerships with representative bodies to gather and analyse workforce evidence from working practitioners.

The structure should include multi-year core support for ADG and AWG as the principal screen authorship guilds, with appropriately scaled support for craft guilds. It should also include a built-in coordination function so that the structure does not depend on unpaid labour or on one organisation subsidising sector-wide administration.

The Producer Offset should become the Production Offset

The current name can reinforce a narrow understanding of public subsidy by suggesting that the principal beneficiary or policy object is the producer.

A Production Offset would better reflect the full ecology that public subsidy is intended to sustain.

It would also sit more coherently with a Screen Authorship Levy or Screen Core Contribution mechanism. If the Offset is understood as support for production as a whole, then it becomes easier to recognise that production support should also contribute to the authorship, rights, career and craft infrastructure that makes production culturally meaningful.

Implementing the Australian Content Requirement and completing audiovisual reform

Australia has now taken an important step by legislating an Australian Content Requirement for major subscription video-on-demand services. ADG and ASDACS welcome this reform.

The next question is whether the new framework builds Australian creative capacity, strengthens Australian authorship, supports sustainable careers, preserves rights and credits, and ensures Australian works have a meaningful cultural life beyond the point of commissioning.

The implementation of the Australian Content Requirement should therefore be evaluated against cultural outcomes, not only expenditure compliance. Relevant measures should include Australian director participation, paid credits, repeat commissioning, career progression, participation by First Nations and underrepresented directors, fair crediting practices, metadata preservation, genre diversity, availability, catalogue retention, public value after commissioning and audience reach.

The framework should also be connected to broader audiovisual policy. Subscription streaming is now regulated, but audiences engage with screen culture across broadcast, BVOD, AVOD, smart TV interfaces, YouTube, social video, games, creator platforms and future AI-mediated services. Cultural policy should remain platform-neutral and able to respond to services according to function, scale and market impact.

The aim should be a fair cultural bargain: services that derive value from Australian audiences should contribute to Australian stories, Australian creative careers, Australian cultural visibility and fair remuneration for audiovisual authors.

Building a Complete Screen Ecology

The Australian Content Requirement should be judged not only by expenditure compliance, but by whether regulated investment creates lasting public value.

If Australian works are commissioned but quickly disappear from public view, are not available for education, are not discussed in public culture, or cannot be located through accurate metadata, the cultural purpose of the scheme is weakened.

Australian screen policy should not only fund production. It should build the wider ecology that allows Australian screen work to be developed, made, seen, taught, remembered, discussed, credited and monetised over time.

Australia has built, and in some cases lost, significant screen culture infrastructure over recent decades. The Australian Film Commission was valuable not only because it supported production, but because it had a broader creator-facing remit: development, low-budget film support, research, enquiries and information services, and screen culture support.[16] The lesson of the AFC legacy is that Australia once recognised that a healthy screen sector required public infrastructure beyond leveraged production finance.

The same is true of the former Screen Resource Organisations, including Metro Screen, Open Channel, QPIX, FTI, MRC and others. These organisations provided practical pathways for emerging creators through training, access, peer networks, advice and early career development. Metro Screen's closure is one example of the loss of practitioner-facing infrastructure between formal education, production funding and sustainable careers.

The current need is not to recreate equipment-access organisations. Production technology is now more accessible than it was when the SROs were established. The gap today is professional formation: mentoring, rights and credit literacy, AI literacy, audience strategy, industry networks, development support, peer accountability, culturally safe practice and career progression.

The next National Cultural Policy should therefore rebuild this infrastructure for contemporary conditions. This should include a dedicated creator-led low-budget and development stream, informed by the AFC legacy, for director/writer-led work, first and second features, documentary, experimental work, animation and culturally significant projects that may not fit conventional financing models.

Such a stream would not duplicate mainstream production financing. It would support creative risk, authorship, professional progression and culturally significant work that may otherwise be too small, too early, too experimental, too director-led or too platform-divergent for standard financing pathways. It would help rebuild a creator-led pathway between education, short-form work, online practice, early credits, festival visibility, audience connection, director maturation and sustainable careers.

Australia has already established valuable public screen access, education and cultural memory infrastructure. The National Film and Sound Archive and Australian Screen Online demonstrate the value of curated public access to Australian screen history, education material and cultural

memory.[17] The next policy should build on this with a contemporary, rights-cleared audience connection strategy that supports lawful access, proper licensing, creator remuneration and accurate attribution.

Screen culture also needs interpretation. Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM), screen journalism, criticism and specialist publications such as IF, Metro Magazine and Screen Education show that a healthy screen culture depends on critics, editors, teachers, study resources and public discourse.[18] Programs such as The Movie Show also demonstrate the role of criticism and public conversation in building audience confidence, cultural memory and shared reference points around Australian screen work. Screen works become part of public life when they are reviewed, taught, debated, programmed, awarded, preserved, contextualised and revisited.

Festivals and awards should be understood in this context. Major and regional festivals, youth film festivals, documentary festivals, short film festivals, awards, cinematheques, repertory screenings, public screenings and university film societies help launch careers, build public discourse, validate cultural value, connect work to audiences and create international visibility. They are audience-development and screen-literacy infrastructure.

The policy should also make space for success outside traditional commissioning models. Australian creators are already building audiences through online-first, YouTube-native, interactive and digital storytelling models. Companies such as Glitch Productions illustrate how Australian creator-led works can reach global audiences through online-first distribution.[19] Australian screen culture now includes film and television, online-first storytelling, games, interactive media, VR/AR and creator-led global audience models.

A complete screen ecology requires a complete success framework.

Production volume, expenditure, jobs, commissions, box office, sales, festival selection and international attraction activity remain important, but they do not fully measure cultural strength. The next National Cultural Policy should also measure whether Australian works are discoverable, discussed, credited, taught, monetised and remembered. Success should include cultural impact, public discourse, festivals, awards, education use, career launch and progression, audience reach, regional reach, long-tail access, rights income, international reputation, creative risk, distinctive Australian authorship and creator remuneration.

ADG and ASDACS therefore propose an Australian Screen Culture and Audience Infrastructure Strategy. This strategy should connect production, access, education, criticism, research, exhibition, creator pathways, rights infrastructure and cultural memory.

It should include a curated Australian Screen Collection for schools, with proper licensing and remuneration for audiovisual authors; a national “where to watch Australian screen” access and

metadata portal; annual Australian Screen Week or National Screen Season; creator-led audience development, including directors in schools, Q&As, regional touring and online craft materials; catalogue availability reporting; screen literacy initiatives; criticism and screen journalism; public-interest access pathways; youth and community media pathways; and partnerships with NFSA, ACMI, public broadcasters, education departments, public libraries, school libraries, festivals, cinemas, guilds, collecting societies and cultural institutions.

This should be developed as a partnership model using existing institutions and legal viewing pathways, rather than as a new standalone agency. It would complement the Australian Content Requirement and allow streamers and broadcasters to retain editorial autonomy while ensuring Australian screen works have meaningful public value beyond the moment of commissioning.

The strategy should also rebuild national screen intelligence. Australia has lost some of the accessible research, enquiries and sector-intelligence functions that historically helped practitioners, policymakers, educators, journalists and the public understand Australian screen culture. A renewed national screen intelligence function should complement the work of Screen Australia and provide accessible data on audiences, availability, career pathways, production, rights, metadata, education use, discoverability, cultural impact, festivals, awards, long-tail access and creator remuneration.

This is not a call to return to the past. It is a call to recover, adapt and boost what has worked: public information, creator pathways, low-budget support, screen culture infrastructure, research, education and access.

Director pathways and sustainable careers

The pathway into directing is difficult. The pathway from emerging to mid-career is often unclear. The pathway from mid-career to sustained work is inconsistent. Directors may spend years developing craft and reputation without reliable income, structured opportunity or fair access to larger-scale work.

The sector often talks about talent, but talent does not develop in a vacuum – it needs repetition, mentorship, credits, risk-taking, professional relationships, paid opportunity and progression.

The decline of long-running television has weakened one of the sector's historical training grounds. Children's television, serial drama, documentary series and other recurring formats have provided important opportunities for directors and crews to build credits, practise craft and progress into more complex work. As commissioning patterns shift toward shorter seasons, fewer episodes and more fragmented formats, these pathways become less reliable.

Publicly supported pathway programs should be assessed by outcomes, not participation alone. Measures should include paid credits, repeat work, retention, advancement and improved access for

First Nations directors, culturally diverse directors, disabled directors, regional practitioners, mid-career directors and other underrepresented groups.

The next National Cultural Policy should treat director pathways as core workforce infrastructure.

Paid director attachments should be required or strongly incentivised through public funding, screen agency programs, state agency investment, public broadcaster commissioning, streamer obligations and major production incentives. These attachments should be structured, purposeful and accountable. They should include clear learning objectives, access to the director's process, meaningful participation, mentoring and reporting.

Beyond attachments, Australia needs pathways that support directors at different stages and in different forms: emerging directors moving into professional work; mid-career directors seeking sustainability and scale; documentary directors carrying long-form authored works; First Nations directors working within culturally safe structures; animation directors leading complex pipelines; regional directors accessing national networks; directors from underrepresented communities; television directors seeking episode opportunities; directors moving between short-form, online, games, streaming and traditional formats; and career pathways linked to inbound production where appropriate.

National training institutions, universities, TAFEs, public broadcasters, state agencies, guilds and industry partners should be connected into a more coherent director pathway framework.

Documentary, children's content, schools and cultural memory

Documentary should be treated as essential cultural and democratic infrastructure.

It records lived experience, supports public understanding, preserves social and historical memory, investigates institutions, builds empathy, enables First Nations truth-telling and gives audiences access to Australian realities that are often absent from commercial entertainment markets.

Documentary directors are among the clearest examples of directors as screen authors. Their work often involves years of research, deep relationships with participants, ethical judgement, point-of-view authorship, structural invention, archive work, legal complexity and impact strategy. They may carry a project from idea to release over many years, often with significant personal and financial risk.

Yet documentary remains structurally vulnerable.

Its public value often exceeds its immediate commercial value. Development is long. Financing is complex. Legal and archive costs can be high. Participant care and ethical obligations extend beyond

production. Impact work frequently continues after release. Distribution may involve festivals, broadcasters, streamers, education, community screenings, advocacy and public discussion.

Public broadcasters are particularly important to documentary. They provide a public-interest commissioning environment for works whose cultural, democratic or civic value may exceed their immediate commercial value. A healthy documentary ecology requires strong public broadcasters, dedicated documentary funding, fair platform obligations and rights settings that allow documentary directors and teams to sustain long-term careers.

Australian children's screen content should also be treated as foundational cultural infrastructure. Children's content is where young Australians first encounter local stories, accents, humour, places, identities and values on screen. It helps children understand themselves and the society around them. It supports imagination, belonging, media literacy and cultural confidence.

In a platform environment shaped by global catalogues, short-form video and commercial attention systems, Australian children's content cannot be left to chance. Strong public broadcasters, education partnerships and rights-cleared school access remain essential to ensuring Australian children encounter Australian stories made for them.

Australian screen policy should not stop at production, commissioning or platform availability. It should also ask how Australian works reach audiences, how they are discussed, how they are taught, and how they remain part of cultural memory.

Schools are central to this. For many young Australians, school may be the most reliable place where they encounter Australian screen works with context, reflection and critical discussion. Australian film, television, documentary, animation and children's content should be more strongly connected to education, curriculum, media literacy, cultural learning and civic understanding.

The next National Cultural Policy should therefore support a national approach to screen education and audience connection.

A renewed Australian screen culture will require building the pathways through which audiences encounter Australian works, understand them, value them and pass them on.

First Nations First, diversity and cultural safety

First Nations screen stories are not a genre. They are central to Australian culture, history, identity, truth-telling and future-making. First Nations directors, writers, producers, performers, communities and cultural authorities must have control over how stories, images, languages, knowledge, histories and cultural materials are created, attributed, accessed, reused and protected.

This has implications across the whole submission.

Authorship reform must recognise First Nations creative authority. Director pathways must support First Nations-led development, mentoring and career progression. Documentary policy must protect ethical relationships, cultural protocols and community control. Children's content should support First Nations children seeing themselves, their cultures and their languages on screen, and all Australian children encountering First Nations stories in culturally appropriate ways. Metadata and archive systems must preserve First Nations authorship, cultural information and access conditions. AI policy must protect against unauthorised extraction, simulation, decontextualisation or commercialisation of First Nations cultural material. Copyright and remuneration reform must engage seriously with ICIP.

Cultural safety must be built into funding, development, production, archive, education, AI and rights settings. This includes ensuring that First Nations creative authority is respected in decision-making, that cultural protocols are embedded early in development, and that First Nations communities are not treated merely as subjects or sources of content.

The next National Cultural Policy should support directors from First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse, disabled, Deaf, regional, LGBTQIA+ and other underrepresented communities to progress into paid credits, repeat commissions and sustained careers. Entry-level access is not enough. The policy goal should be creative authority, professional continuity and cultural safety across development, production, commissioning, funding, distribution and audience engagement.

Publicly supported productions and institutions should be expected to demonstrate culturally safe practice, fair crediting, meaningful creative participation and progression outcomes. This should include practical support for underrepresented directors to move from attachment, shadowing and development opportunities into credited work and repeat commissioning.

Screen Australia reform and practitioner representation

Any reform or strengthening of Screen Australia should include directors and writers in governance and advisory structures.

Screen Australia is central to the national screen ecology. Its decisions shape which works are developed, which careers progress, which forms are supported, which voices are heard and how Australian screen culture evolves. It should therefore have direct access to the expertise of the people who author and make screen works.

Screen Australia's governance and advisory structures should include substantial professional expertise from directors and writers. This is not a call for narrow representation. It is a call for relevant expertise.

Directors and writers understand creative development, production realities, career pathways, audience risk, authorship, rights, credits, working conditions and the lived experience of making Australian screen work. This expertise should be embedded in the institutions that shape screen policy and funding.

Screen Australia should also have formal, ongoing advisory relationships with screen authorship and craft guilds. These relationships should be resourced. They should not rely on unpaid consultation or informal goodwill.

A reformed screen policy framework should ensure that Screen Australia supports not only production activity, but also creative authorship, fair remuneration, career sustainability, rights literacy, audience connection, cultural value and long-term sector capacity.

Implementation roadmap

Timeframe	Action	Lead and partners	Outcome measures
Within 12 months	Convene a design process for a Screen Authorship and Craft Infrastructure mechanism	Office for the Arts, Screen Australia, Creative Australia, ADG, ASDACS, AWG/AWGACS, craft guilds, Screenrights and relevant departments	Agreed design options, budget model, governance model and implementation pathway
Within 18 months	Establish credit and metadata standards for publicly supported screen works	Screen Australia, state agencies, public broadcasters, streamers where relevant, ASDACS, Screenrights, NFSA and guilds	Title-level and episode-level director metadata incorporated into funding, delivery and licensing requirements
Within two years	Pilot guild infrastructure and rights education funding	Office for the Arts, Screen Australia, Creative Australia, ADG, ASDACS, AWG/AWGACS and craft guilds	National rights education program delivered, including model contract guidance, AI clause guidance, moral rights guidance, credit guidance and secondary remuneration explainers
Within two years	Design an Australian Screen Culture and Audience Infrastructure Strategy	Office for the Arts, Screen Australia, NFSA, ACMI, public broadcasters, state agencies, education departments, public libraries, festivals, cinemas, guilds, collecting societies, screen education bodies and cultural institutions	Strategy scoped; rights-cleared access options identified; national screen intelligence function designed; creator-led low-budget stream model developed; school/library access and audience connection pilots established.
Within two years	Develop a complete screen success framework	Office for the Arts, Screen Australia, NFSA, ACMI, state agencies, public broadcasters, guilds, collecting societies, festivals, researchers and education bodies	Evaluation framework includes production activity, cultural impact, audience reach, education use, long-tail access, rights income, creator remuneration, career progression, regional reach, public discourse, festivals, awards, preservation and discoverability.
Within three years	Implement a recurrent infrastructure mechanism	Government, Screen Australia or other suitable arm's-length administrator, ADG, ASDACS, AWG/AWGACS and craft guilds	Stable core funding, public-interest service obligations, annual reporting and evaluation framework
Within the policy term	Develop pathways toward collective remuneration for audiovisual authors	Government, ASDACS, relevant collecting societies, Screenrights, rightsholders and sector stakeholders	Options paper, legal pathway, data requirements and implementation model for directors' remuneration

Implementation measures should include director participation in publicly supported productions and streamer-commissioned Australian content; paid credits; repeat commissioning; conversion from attachments to credited work; paid development opportunities; regional participation; participation of First Nations, culturally diverse, disabled and underrepresented directors; credit integrity; access to rights income and secondary remuneration; use of fair contract terms; rights and AI education delivered; audience connection initiatives delivered; cultural availability of publicly supported works; and evidence partnerships with guilds and collecting societies.

These steps are practical, staged and achievable. They would not dismantle the existing screen system. They would complete it.

Implementation principles and safeguards

These proposals are designed to complete the existing screen system, not dismantle it. A stronger screen authorship and craft infrastructure model should be practical, accountable and complementary to existing producer-side, agency, union, broadcaster, streamer and public institutional settings.

Any production-linked contribution, levy or core contribution model should be proportionate and predictable. It should be capable of being planned for in production budgets, treated consistently across eligible productions and administered efficiently. Producer-side levies and international skills funds already demonstrate that recurring contributions can be accommodated within production systems where the rules are clear.

The proposed mechanism should complement existing agencies, not duplicate them. Screen agencies fund, regulate and administer programs. Guilds and collecting societies provide direct practitioner infrastructure, rights expertise, workforce intelligence, standards work, member engagement and live feedback from working creators. These functions are different and complementary.

The objective is to strengthen collaboration across the whole screen ecology. Properly resourced authorship and craft bodies would be better partners for producers, agencies, unions, broadcasters, streamers, educators and government. The proposal is not to shift support from one part of the industry to another, but to ensure that producer-side, author-side and craft-side infrastructure are all strong enough to contribute to a healthy screen sector.

The design should be transparent and accountable. Any recurrent infrastructure mechanism should include public-interest service obligations, clear eligibility criteria, annual reporting, appropriate governance standards and periodic evaluation. Funding should be tied to functions that benefit the sector: rights education, standards development, workforce evidence, career pathways, member support, policy consultation, credit and metadata work, and industry coordination.

Collective remuneration mechanisms should be designed to reduce, not increase, transaction costs. Collective management exists because individual creators cannot practically track, license or enforce every secondary use of their works. Properly designed collective mechanisms can support efficient licensing, accurate attribution and fair distribution, while giving users, producers, platforms and institutions clear pathways for compliance.

The Australian Content Requirement should be treated as the first phase of audiovisual reform, not the endpoint. It secures an expenditure obligation for major SVOD services, but it does not by itself resolve authorship, rights, metadata, career progression, cultural availability, audience connection or downstream remuneration. These issues require implementation, evaluation and complementary cultural infrastructure.

The proposed Australian Screen Culture and Audience Infrastructure Strategy should work with audience behaviour rather than attempt to control it. ADG and ASDACS are not proposing that platform algorithms be the sole or primary mechanism for audience connection. Practical alternatives include school access, public-interest windows, metadata, a legal “where to watch” portal, creator-led audience development, archive partnerships and national screen programming.

Private investment should be encouraged while remaining aligned with public value. Private, philanthropic and social impact investment can play a larger role in Australian screen culture, but investment supported by public subsidy, tax settings or cultural legitimacy should strengthen Australian creative leadership, not weaken creator rights, credit integrity or remuneration.

Screen policy should also measure success more completely. Production activity, expenditure and market performance matter, but they are incomplete measures of cultural strength. Evaluation should also consider whether Australian works reach audiences, support sustainable creative careers, generate rights income, build public discourse, travel internationally, enter education, remain available over time and contribute to Australian cultural memory.

Representative infrastructure should be funded on a public-interest basis. Government already relies on representative and practitioner bodies across many sectors for consultation, workforce intelligence, standards development and implementation support. Screen authorship and craft infrastructure should be supported where it is accountable, transparent, appropriately scoped and tied to clear public-interest functions.

ADG and ASDACS do not deny that their organisations need to be stronger. That is the point. Government, agencies, producers, platforms and the public all benefit when screen authorship infrastructure is strong, accountable and capable. These proposals are intended to strengthen the whole screen ecology.

Conclusion

Australia has an opportunity to design the next phase of screen policy with greater ambition.

Revive rebuilt confidence in national cultural policy. It recognised artists as both workers and creators, established new cultural infrastructure, and restored culture to the centre of national life. The next task is to ensure screen policy does not stop at attracting production or increasing content volume. It must sustain the people and institutions that make Australian screen culture possible.

Directors are central to that task.

They are creative authors, cultural workers, collaborators, leaders and rights-holders. Their work shapes how Australians see themselves and how Australia is seen internationally. Yet current settings do not adequately recognise their authorship, protect their rights, support their careers or ensure they share fairly in the continuing value of their work.

ADG and ASDACS are ready to be part of the solution.

ADG provides the professional, industrial, cultural, workforce and advocacy infrastructure for directors. ASDACS provides the authorship and secondary-rights infrastructure that connects directors to ongoing remuneration. Together, they represent a practical, accountable and future-facing model of creator-side cultural infrastructure.

The next National Cultural Policy should recognise and support that infrastructure.

The task now is not simply to maintain an industry. It is to build a renewed Australian screen culture: confident in its own stories, ambitious for its audiences, fair to its creators, and capable of generating cultural and economic value over the long term.

Australia does not only need more production. It needs a screen system that recognises and sustains the people who author, direct, shape, protect and carry Australian screen culture across its full life.

Source Notes

[1] Office for the Arts, *Towards a new National Cultural Policy: Public Consultation Paper*, March 2026, especially the continuation of the five Revive pillars and consultation questions on First Nations First, A Place for Every Story, Centrality of the Artist, Strong Cultural Infrastructure and Engaging the Audience.

[2] Office for the Arts, “Australian screen content requirement for streaming services,” confirming passage of the Communications Legislation Amendment (Australian Content Requirement for Subscription Video On Demand (Streaming) Services) Bill on 27 November 2025; the 10% Australian program expenditure / 7.5% Australian revenue obligation; eligible genres; ACMA reporting; and the 250,000-subscriber notification threshold.

[3] Office for the Arts, *Towards a new National Cultural Policy: Public Consultation Paper*, March 2026, discussion of digital tools and platforms, creative rights, fair remuneration, changing audience behaviour, discoverability, participation and resilient cultural infrastructure.

[4] Directive (EU) 2019/790 of the European Parliament and of the Council on copyright and related rights in the Digital Single Market, Article 18, “Principle of appropriate and proportionate remuneration.”

[5] Directors Guild of America, “Residuals” and “Understanding Residuals,” explaining DGA residuals, reuse payments, enforcement and evolution across broadcast, home video, pay television, basic cable, AVOD and SVOD.

[6] Office for the Arts, “Australian Lending Right Schemes (ELR/PLR),” confirming that PLR and ELR compensate Australian creators and publishers in recognition of income lost through free multiple use of books in public and educational lending libraries.

[7] Office for the Arts, *Towards a new National Cultural Policy: Public Consultation Paper*, March 2026; and *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place*, 2023, on Creative Australia, Music Australia, Writing Australia, Creative Workplaces, First Nations Arts, national collecting institutions, training organisations and the artist-as-worker frame.

[8] Australian Directors’ Guild, *ADG Priorities 2024/26*, on minimum employment standards, best-practice contracts, rate cards, director rights education, career pathways, attachments and placements, mentoring, policy advocacy, copyright/IP, streamer regulation, AI, research and strategic partnerships.

[9] Olsberg SPI for Screen Australia, *A Production, Infrastructure and Capacity Analysis for Australia’s Screen Production Sector*, April 2026, especially sections on current screen sector capacity, education and training provision, gaps between training and set-ready industry expectations, practical placements, and barriers for under-represented practitioners.

[10] Office for the Arts, *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place*, 2023, Pillar 5 case study on children’s screen content, quoting the Australian Children’s Television Foundation on children’s screen content as “truly nation building.”

[11] Office for the Arts, *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place*, 2023, Pillar 3, “Centrality of the Artist,” recognising artists as both workers and creators and identifying insecure work, minimum standards and fair pay as cultural policy concerns.

[12] Office for the Arts, *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place*, 2023, on the establishment of Creative Workplaces and its role in supporting fair, safe and respectful workplaces in the arts and entertainment sector.

[13] Screen Producers Australia, “Production Levies Statement & Obligations: 2025–26FY,” effective 13 February 2025; Screen Producers Association of Australia, *Annual Report 2024/25*, Notes to the Financial Statements, Note 4 “Revenue and Other Income,” recording \$1,496,585 in compulsory levies revenue in 2025 and \$1,355,038 in 2024; *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997* (Cth), Division 376, establishing the Producer Offset, Location Offset and PDV Offset and the framework for determining qualifying Australian production expenditure.

[14] ScreenSkills, “Contribute to the High-end TV Skills Fund” and “Contribute to the Film Skills Fund,” on UK production-linked skills contributions and training/career-development funds.

[15] ADG/ASDACS member survey evidence, 2025. Internal survey data provided for policy development; not a whole-of-industry statistical survey.

[16] Australian Film Commission archival and historical materials, including its former role in development support, low-budget film support, research, information services and screen culture activity.

[17] National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Australian Screen Online and related public access and education resources.

[18] ATOM, *Metro Magazine* and *Screen Education*, on screen literacy, education resources, criticism and public interpretation of screen culture.

[19] Glitch Productions public materials and platform channels, on Australian creator-led animation and online-first distribution.

[20] Attorney-General’s Department, “Copyright and Artificial Intelligence Reference Group” and Attorney-General media release, “Albanese Government to ensure Australia is prepared for future copyright challenges from emerging AI,” 26 October 2025, noting that the Government is not considering a text and data mining exception in Australian copyright law and is consulting through CAIRG on AI and copyright issues.

Submitted on behalf of the Australian Directors' Guild and the
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