

NEW NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY by Peter Barta 24th May 2026

To Whom It May Concern:

I have worked in the Australian film and television industry for more than 30 years, and while the industry has always been volatile, I have never seen conditions as difficult or uncertain as they are right now.

For many of us, this is not just about jobs — it is about protecting Australian culture, storytelling and the thousands of skilled workers who have dedicated their lives to this industry. After spending more than three decades building my career in film and television, I have now been largely out of work for the past three years, forced to pivot simply to survive by taking on odd jobs.

I ask politicians to genuinely consider what that feels like. Imagine dedicating 30 years of your life to building experience, skills and a professional reputation in your chosen field, only to suddenly find yourself unable to work in that industry and scrambling for whatever work you can find just to pay the bills. This is now the reality for many Australian screen workers.

The Federal Government's National Cultural Policy, *Revive: A Place for Every Story, A Story for Every Place*, recognises the importance of protecting Australian stories, creative workers and cultural identity. I strongly support those goals. But from where many of us are standing inside the industry, there is now a growing gap between the language of the policy and the reality being experienced by crews, technicians, creatives and production workers on the ground.

If Australia truly values its stories and creative identity, then urgent action is needed before we lose the workforce and infrastructure required to keep telling those stories ourselves.

I strongly believe the future of Australia's screen industry depends on meaningful reform and long-term investment. Without support, we risk losing not only jobs, but Australian ownership of Australian stories.

I would like to raise the following issues for serious discussion and government action:

- Implementing 20% revenue investment obligations for streaming platforms operating in Australia so global companies contribute fairly to the local industry they profit from.
- Protecting free-to-view Australian content so our stories remain accessible to all Australians and are not hidden entirely behind subscription platforms.
- Safeguarding Australian intellectual property ownership so local creators and companies retain long-term value from the content we produce.
- Properly defining “Australian content” so it genuinely reflects Australian voices, Australian crews, Australian locations and authentic Australian storytelling — not productions that only technically qualify on paper.
- Maintaining the independence of the Australian screen industry from increasing overseas control and protecting long-term local employment opportunities.

- Addressing the growing impact of international trade pressures, tariffs and global market instability on local production and Australian jobs.

Queensland has demonstrated that government investment in the screen industry can work when there is real commitment behind it. Through aggressive investment in studios, infrastructure and production incentives, Queensland has positioned itself as a major destination for both local and international productions, creating real jobs and long-term opportunities for Australian crews and creatives.

New South Wales should already be doing the same.

Instead, Sydney has spent years talking about the need for a second major studio facility while other states continue moving forward. That infrastructure should have been built years ago. While Queensland expands and invests in the future, NSW risks falling behind because of delays, lack of urgency and insufficient long-term planning for the screen industry workforce.

We do not need more discussion panels, strategy documents and announcements without action. We need real investment, real infrastructure and genuine support for the thousands of Australian workers trying to stay employed in this industry.

Another growing concern is the rapid rise of artificial intelligence and its impact on employment across the creative industries. AI is not some distant future issue — it is already replacing jobs, reducing opportunities and creating enormous uncertainty for writers, editors, designers, voice artists, production staff and many others throughout the industry.

The National Cultural Policy speaks about placing artists and creative workers at the centre of Australia's cultural future. If that commitment is genuine, then government policy must urgently address how AI will affect creative employment before even more Australian jobs disappear.

At the same time, content regulation discussions appear to have stalled, while uncertainty surrounding future international trade policies and tariffs continues to grow. This makes protecting and strengthening Australia's local screen industry even more urgent.

More than 25,000 Australian screen workers depend on this industry for their livelihoods. We are not asking for handouts. We are asking for the opportunity to work, create and continue telling Australian stories for future generations.

I do not want to sit around any longer watching this industry slowly disappear while skilled Australian workers are forced out of careers they have spent decades building.

We need leadership.

We need investment.

We need action.

If the goals of Revive truly matter, then governments at every level must move beyond slogans and start backing Australian stories and Australian workers with real long-term commitment.

Let's protect Australian stories, Australian jobs and Australian ownership — before it is too late.

And let's make Australia Bonza again.

Peter Barta SOC

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www.peterbarta.com.au

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