

Australian Cultural Policy Submission

I live in a regional area of NSW and have long been involved in community theatre, acting, directing, writing and made the decision to become a professional screenwriter 12 years ago. I have done courses, seminars, attended conferences and developed stories into pilot scripts, am on the committee of a regional film association that runs an annual film festival, and yet I have found the pathway to becoming a professional screenwriter difficult, particularly because I live in a regional area.

For many emerging filmmakers the best opportunity to gain credits and be seen is to make a short film, which can be entered into film festivals in Australia and overseas. Producers attend the better-known film festivals and take an interest in emerging talent. The screen bodies, both national and state, do not offer support for short films, meaning most short films are funded out of the pockets of filmmakers who are already struggling financially. Specific funding for short film development through the screen bodies would be of great benefit in furthering the careers of emerging writers, directors, producers, actors and cinematographers.

The development and financial support of emerging filmmakers' projects could also be encouraged from philanthropists. To this end government sponsored networking occasions that bring emerging filmmakers, writers, directors, producers together with philanthropists could assist in the partnering of financial support for the creatives telling stories that reflect Australian culture. This would be particularly helpful for regional practitioners who do not have access to this level of financial support. Perhaps tax breaks or some other reward would incentivise philanthropists toward supporting emerging writers and filmmakers.

We are inundated with films and tv series from other countries and cultures, particularly the United States. My grandchildren and their friends were actually speaking with American accents when they were 8 and 9 years 's old because of the content they were watching. As screen is such a popular medium it is culturally important to portray the Australian perspective on screen.

Now that the government has brought in an Australian streaming content quota there should be more opportunities for Australian stories to be produced and broadcast. It is important that this opportunity embraces different Australian voices, including regional voices, not just location, but inclusion of creatives and crews from remote and regional areas. Perhaps quotas for regional areas, or incentives for filming in regional areas, and using the talent available there, including writers, directors, cinematographers.

As a regional screenwriter I need more opportunities to pitch to producers, they don't accept emailed cold call pitches, in Australia it is all about networking in person. So more online pitching fests, support for travel and accommodation at film festivals and incentives for producers to take a risk on an emerging writer. These could all help to create possibilities for regional screenwriters to have their screenplays produced and their stories told.

