

SUBMISSION - NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY - PILLAR 4 Strong Cultural Infrastructure

The lack of stable, long-term infrastructure has been a particular liability for the film industry. In 1992 we established Hero Frock Hire in order to secure ongoing costume supply. In the mid '90's we were involved in the preparation and establishment of what became the Fox Studios Complex, and in the late 90's, when it became clear that the local industry's services would not be able to be housed at Fox, we initiated the Canal Road Film Centre in Leichhardt.

For our own part we eventually found it to be incompatible acting in an administrative role at CRFC as well as managing our own company. The thorny issue overall has been the public/private debate over who should supply industry infrastructure. Historically such facilities were provided by large organisations such as the ABC, TV stations, or overseas by the major film studio companies. In modern times however the trend is to avoid carrying these overheads, and to "outsource". Contractors and Producers supply specific project-based services, but a gap existed for long term facilities and resources, and this was not necessarily viable as private enterprise. This was somewhat addressed by the establishment of the Canal Road Film Centre, (taken over in 2021 by Create NSW and rebranded as the "One Canal Road Precinct").

Now unquestionably the hub of the of the NSW Industry, the site is home to the majority of local infrastructure - Grips, Electrics, Props, Costume, Catering and Unit depts. A number of other diverse suppliers are also represented. The Production offices can claim to have been essential to great local successes including *Two Hands*, *Footy Legends*, *The Sapphires* to name a few.

When we originally flagged the project in the mid 1990's, it was quite controversial and required a great deal of faith and foresight from the State Government and the NSW FTO. The site was in poor condition, and as a result a deal was negotiated whereby the State Government would upgrade the site to standard and the rent would be adjusted to a discounted market rate, which remains the deal under Create, as administered by multi-national corporate real estate players Colliers. The unfortunate reality is that the NSW film industry is in a dire situation. We believe that rental at this facility should be charged at an "arts" rate, rather than a commercial market-based rate. In this way we bridge the "public/private" issue in a way that is beneficial to all parties; the current shortcoming a continuing flaw in the overall structure.

Developing our industry from its 'cottage industry' origins to an international level remains an ongoing issue for NSW Producers, Screen NSW, and for the APDG. Assets that require large scale storage are critical, but we have no overarching studio system, and production companies create content, they no longer administer infrastructure. Do we need new partnership models for our industry? Can business / philanthropy / local expertise come together to create new and innovative structures to take us to the next level?

After over thirty years running Australia's only professional costume resource for film and TV, with retirement approaching, Hero Frock Hire's owners have been seeking a

means to a succession strategy for some years now. Ultimately the company may have to be put up for sale, but what are the options? Sell locally? (will it remain a film industry asset or be opened up for fancy dress?), become a satellite of an overseas costume company, or an asset of an international studio? We could sell the collection to established overseas entrepreneurs? Or will it ultimately end up on Ebay or go to general auction, with the Design Dept back to the drawing board once again?

Another critical aspect is that NSW now unfortunately holds little incentive for such key infrastructure to remain “in situ”. Regrettably NSW no longer holds the crown as leader of the Australian Industry. Many of our key tenants here at Canal Road are working mostly interstate, either in Victoria or Queensland. Increasingly they will relocate permanently, particularly in consideration of the level of investment in professional studio facilities interstate (notably Queensland, and W.A.).