

National Cultural Policy Submission

Australian Screen Sound Guild (ASSG)

Submitted: On behalf of an arts peak body

The Australian Screen Sound Guild (ASSG) represents the profession of sound in film, television, and other screen and media industries. Members include those who work in production (location sound during principal photography) and post-production (sound editing and mixing). Our members are highly skilled and well-regarded, with many of them recipients of numerous Australian and international awards.

This submission is focused on pillar 3, Centrality of the Artist.

The Centrality of the Artist

Creative work is not confined to the efforts of an individual artist. Screen stories in particular are the work of multiple collaborators, with specialist creative artists each contributing according to their role and expertise. Our members contribute by using sound to tell stories, and by enhancing the tone, style and aesthetic appeal of screen-based projects.

Sound practitioners need continuing work to contribute to Australian stories, and to develop the expertise that allows for high quality production values. International productions do not provide this ongoing work and professional development, either because they do not employ early-career practitioners; or because they typically only complete principal photography (and not post-production) in Australia. It is only Australian productions – telling Australian stories – that provide for sustained development, and which underpin the careers of our sound practitioners.

It is, therefore, essential to ensure that Australian screen sound practitioners can work within an economic framework that enables them to create, participate and prosper within the sector. Because without Australian sound artists there can be no true Australian screen stories.

For this reason, the Australian Screen Sound Guild believes that a national cultural policy must also address the economic framework that allows sound practitioners to be recognised and rewarded fairly for their work. That framework must also allow practitioners to build a career based on a lifetime of creative work, telling Australian stories.

The framework should include:

- contracts and payment arrangements that allow sound practitioners to earn a living wage
- requirements on overseas productions for the professional development of Australian sound practitioners (e.g., through shadowing or assistant opportunities)
- funding/investment regulations that support realistic budgets (and therefore do not require individuals to work on deferred payments or to participate in financially punitive re-investment arrangements)
- support for early career practitioners through properly funded training and internship programs

Note that the above should not be seen as extraordinary, and yet, despite the best intentions of Australian producers, they are not the current reality. And, importantly, this reality is not conducive to enabling diversity in the creative workforce.

Our culture is built on the telling of diverse Australian stories, but that can only happen in an environment that sustains all artists and practitioners involved in the telling of those stories. Thus, to promote the centrality of the artist requires frameworks and structures that support all individuals involved in creative work, and this includes Australian screen sound practitioners