

**13 September 2019**

## **Screen Producers Australia's submission to Creative State 2020+**

Screen Producers Australia (SPA) was formed by the screen industry to represent large and small enterprises across a diverse production slate of feature film, television and interactive content.

As the peak industry and trade body, we consult with a membership of more than 500 production businesses in the preparation of our submissions. This consultation is augmented by ongoing discussions with our elected Council and appointed Policy Working Group representatives. Our members employ hundreds of producers, thousands of related practitioners and drive more than \$1.7 billion worth of annual production activity from the independent sector.

On behalf of these businesses we are focused on delivering a healthy commercial environment through ongoing engagement with elements of the labour force, including directors, writers, actors and crew, as well as with broadcasters, distributors and government in all its various forms. This coordinated dialogue ensures that our industry is successful, employment levels are strong and the community's expectations of access to high quality Australian content have been met.

SPA welcomes the opportunity to provide a brief submission to the Victorian Government's Creative State 20+ consultations. In preparing this submission we consulted with our Victorian-based membership

For further information about this submission please contact Fiona Phillips, Policy Consultant ([fiona.phillips@screenproducers.org.au](mailto:fiona.phillips@screenproducers.org.au)) or Matthew Deaner, CEO ([matthew.deaner@screenproducers.org.au](mailto:matthew.deaner@screenproducers.org.au)).

SPA commends the Victorian Government on the achievements of *Creative State* 2016-20. In particular, we endorse the approach of locating measurable Actions within the context of a broader strategy.

A number of the Actions which form part of the 2016-20 strategy are directed towards the screen industry:

Action 5: Screen professional development;

Action 13: Screen businesses; and

Action 14: Screen production and events.

We congratulate the Victorian Government on prioritising these Actions and on the important initiatives which they have supported. For example, Action 14 has seen not only the production of content such as *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, it has also successfully facilitated SPA hosting SCREEN FOREVER, Australia's premier event for screen industry professionals in Melbourne.

In taking Creative State forward for the period beyond 2020, SPA believes that are three key issues for screen production:

## **1. The importance of Australian productions**

Victoria has undoubtedly had great success in attracting large budget international productions and should be congratulated for this. Such productions yield some downstream benefits to the local industry and to the economy as a whole.

However, we are concerned that this success should not divert the Victorian Government's focus from the importance of continuing to support local, independent productions. These productions offer the most efficient return per dollar in terms of jobs, economic impact and sustained local business opportunity. We urge the Government to bear this in mind in developing its strategy for the next four years.

## **2. Supporting Victorian screen businesses**

It is also vital that the Victorian Government's strategy for the future is focused on retaining and growing its screen businesses. This is partly about funding and supporting the development of business skills, but also about creating an environment that nurtures creative endeavour and gives our members confidence to invest and hire talent. Programs that look to develop and sustain this business confidence should be encouraged and maintained.

### **3. Removing Unnecessary Red Tape**

An overly bureaucratic approach to the administration of legislation, can undermine confidence in basing productions in Victoria and create an impression that the state is not a good place to do business.

For example, SPA fully endorses the policy objectives of the *Child Employment Act 2003 (Vic)* (the Act) in aiming to ensure work does not adversely affect a child's education and that the health, safety, moral and material welfare of a child at work in Victoria is protected. Furthermore, our members observe the *Guide to the Employment of Children in the Victorian Entertainment Industry* and the Mandatory Code of Practice. However, we are aware that "employment" is defined very broadly under the Act and that this definition can sometimes be applied mechanistically when it comes to observational documentary film making in Victoria. In our submission, this approach does not serve the policy objectives of the Act, nor does it facilitate the work of responsible film makers. By addressing such impediments, the Victorian Government can help to build an environment that is conducive to retaining and growing screen businesses in Victoria. We are happy to provide you with more information about the negative experiences our members have had in filming in Victoria. The same issues are not present in other states or territories.