

**28 November 2019**

## **Screen Producers Australia's submission on the Northern Territory's Creative Industry Strategy**

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. Our members employ hundreds of producers, thousands of related practitioners and drive more than \$1.2 billion worth of annual production activity from the independent sector as well as nearly \$1 billion in export earnings and tourism expenditure generated by the screen industry as a whole.

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 Northern Territory Government's Creative Industry Strategy consultations. In preparing this submission we consulted with our Northern Territory-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)).

## **The role of the screen industry as part of the Northern Territory's creative industries**

As your data has revealed, screen is an important part of the Northern Territory's creative industries. The screen industry employs people from all parts of the creative industries in what can be short and long term projects, combining skills from directing, writing, acting, music performance, set construction, cinematography, editing, costume making, lighting and producing. This employment generates income and resources that benefit many parts of the creative industries as well as broader economy.

Six of SPA's members are permanently based in the Northern Territory, while many more members create content in and for the Northern Territory. There are also many Indigenous producers working in the Northern Territory, seven of whom attended our annual industry conference, SCREEN FOREVER, earlier this month.

Many projects choose to shoot in the Northern Territory because of its unique locations and stories. According to the latest survey of the independent production sector conducted by Deloitte, in 2018 the Northern Territory made up 3% of screen production in Australia. This is significant when you consider that Deloitte estimated independent production revenue in 2018 at \$1.2 billion.

Screen productions from the Northern Territory tend to resonate with audiences. In Australia and overseas and have enjoyed a high degree of success. For example, just this year, *Top End Wedding* and *Robbie Hood* both won awards at the Screen Producers Awards. They follow a proud tradition of previous productions such as *Sweet Country* and *Samson and Delilah* which received acclaim both nationally and globally.

The success of the Northern Territory screen industry has been facilitated by support from the Northern Territory Government through new funding and the Northern Territory Screen Industry Development Plan 2018-2020. SPA is keen to see this continue through coordination with the broader Northern Territory Creative Industry Strategy.

## **The important role of the Northern Territory for screen export, tourism and soft diplomacy**

The world is currently experiencing a content boom, as traditional media businesses compete with new businesses for audiences. Australia, and specifically, the Northern Territory, are in a unique position to capitalise on that boom.

However, it is not just about attracting international productions to our great locations. It is about exporting our stories to the world and ensuring a sustainable Australian industry through the creation and careful exploitation of intellectual property.

The screen industry is truly global. According to the most recent Deloitte survey, almost half (47%) of Australian production business are generating export revenue. This is compared to only 7.6% for the average Australian business. However, our

industry has the capacity to generate much more export revenue than it does currently, for the benefit of local business, increased employment and ultimately, the Australian economy. This can be achieved through a combination of both federal and Territory policies including, regulation and fiscal stimulus.

SPA has a number of strategies to help drive an export growth agenda and would welcome engagement with both the Northern Territory Government as well as other relevant bodies to discuss the specific opportunities to expand exports in the Northern Territory.

As the Discussion Paper acknowledges, apart from direct export revenue, the creative industries are also key in attracting tourists to Australia. For example, according to Screen Australia's *Screen Currency Report 2016*, screen content attracts \$725 million in tourism spending to Australia each year.

Our uniquely Australian screen stories are also a powerful tool for soft diplomacy. The screen industry is arguably Australia's key soft power asset and is a flagship industry for Australia's culture and national identity. Screen content and new media is now ubiquitously consumed world-wide on traditional broadcasting media, social media, digital platforms and streaming services, making it increasingly relevant to national security, political stability and cultural diplomacy objectives.

Australian screen content is able to quickly and effectively convey understandings of Australian lifestyle, culture, history, artistry and values as well as our significant natural resources and world-class produce. This fosters mutual understandings and helps build trust and familiarity

### **The proposed strategic themes and the need for coordination**

The consultation paper proposes five themes for the Strategy: People; Places; Proximity; Pathways; and Policy. SPA thinks that these themes encapsulate the issues relevant for screen producers in the Northern Territory and is supportive of this approach.

We recommend that in developing the Creative Industry Strategy, there should be coordination with sector specific initiatives such as the Northern Territory Screen Industry Development Plan 2018-20.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide any further input.