

29 March 2016

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Media Reform Bill) 2016

Screen Producers Australia was formed by the screen industry to represent large and small enterprises across a diverse production slate of feature film, television and interactive content. We welcome this opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications on the Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Media Reform Bill) 2016.

As the peak industry and trade body, we consult with a membership of more than 400 production businesses in the preparation of our submissions. This consultation is augmented by ongoing discussions with our elected Council and appointed Policy Reference 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.

It is Screen Producers Australia's view that media regulation must put Australian consumers first. Whilst these reforms address specific aspects of the 'reach rule' and 'two-out-of-three rule', consideration must also be given to the overall balance of obligations and regulations.

The Australian Content Standard, Children's Television Standard and the New Eligible Drama Expenditure Scheme must be retained and reviewed to ensure that they are fit for purpose with their original intent adequately reflected in the evolving market. Furthermore, fair and balanced obligations should be faced by new online content services as the audience and industry alike look to them for a meaningful contribution to Australian screens through original production of Australian screen stories.

Screen Producers Australia has welcomed a number of new online streaming services to the Australian market over the last year. These new subscription services, such as Netflix, join the likes of free services like YouTube in changing the landscape for consumers and producers.

Australian audiences, Australian screen businesses and Australian culture benefit from a vibrant screen industry generating quality Australian product. In particular, the contribution of commercial and public broadcasters to local production is critical and the quality of their output must be continually applauded, although not taken for granted.

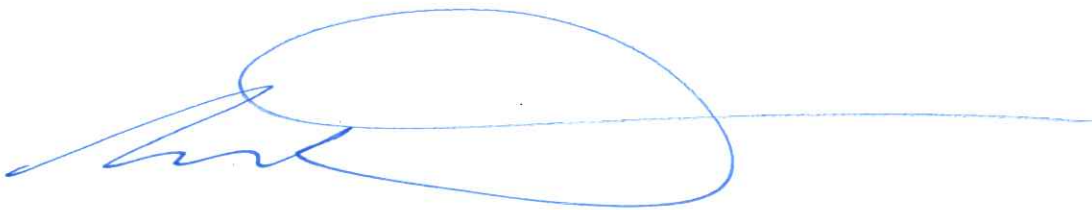
In the context of on-going policy discussions at a national level around television broadcasting, both in terms of revenue and regulation, coupled with the launch of these online services, it is important to remember the value of mechanisms to support local content on our screens.

Whilst we are pleased to see new players such as Netflix enter our expanding market, we trust that this will not just provide an avenue for imported content and local catalogue titles, but also will result in a valuable contribution to Australian screens through original local production.

To this end, Screen Producers Australia encourages the Federal Government to consider appropriate content obligations so all Australians, particularly those in rural and regional areas, are not short changed by the lack of local screen stories.

If you would like to discuss this further please contact Matthew Hancock (Manager, Strategy and Operations) on matthew.hancock@screenproducers.org.au or 02 8076 5878.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Matthew Deaner
CEO