National Cultural Policy Submission

Submission from the members of screen and media education peak bodies:

ASPERA

Established in 2004, the Australian Screen Production Education and Research Association is the peak discipline body representing 17 Australian and New Zealand tertiary institutions teaching and researching film, television and new media as screen-based production practices at undergraduate and/or postgraduate levels. ASPERA plays an active role in shaping quality education for those working or planning to work in production or research for the screen. It addresses the relationship between the screen production education sector of the industry and the wider Australian screen industries. It aims to lift the profile of the screen based industries within the wider economic, social and cultural development of Australia.

CILECT/CAPA

Founded in 1954, CILECT includes over 200 audio-visual educational institutions from over 65 countries on 6 continents with 10,000+ teachers and staff that annually train 60,000+ students and communicate with an alumni network over 1,350,000+ strong. CILECT believes in the inherent inter-connectivity of humankind and fully supports creativity, diversity, cross-cultural thinking and sustainable development as fundamental prerequisites to human existence and progress. CILECT is committed to developing and promoting the highest standards of education, research and training for film, television, animation and related media through establishing and organizing global and regional forums for the exchange of artistic, pedagogical, methodological and managerial best practices for all its members. Australia is part of the CILECT Asia Pacific Regional Association (CAPA) and hosts the regional Chair for the past 8 years.

CONTRIBUTORS

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INTRODUCTION

The members of ASPERA, CILECT (Australia) and screen education institutions are pleased to make this collective submission in support of a new National Cultural Policy.

This submission is focused on pillar 4:

> **Strong Institutions**: providing support across the spectrum of institutions – funded, philanthropic and commercial – which sustain our arts and culture.

It is our collective belief that strong screen education institutions are critical to the success of Australian cultural life. This submission identifies the opportunities and challenges facing the ongoing growth and empowerment of screen education institutions that we would like to see addressed in a new National Cultural Policy. Our institutions are responding to the growth of screen and media industries and have a key role to play in supporting the creation of authentic Australian content, which is vital to a strong Australian culture. We represent established institutions that offer cutting edge research projects, PhD and Masters research training, degrees in Film, Television, Animation, Games and Communication & Media, industry internships, as well as industry training Diplomas and Certificates.

OPPORTUNITIES

Identified opportunities:

- Support the development of cross-institutional frameworks enabling an effective 'skills development model'. This could be achieved through:
  - Increased government support for peak educational bodies to solidify and improve relationships between education and industry, including professional bodies and guilds and large multi-national streaming organisations.
  - An education and training policy that recognises Australia's screen industry ecosystem and supports partnerships between industry funded foreign and local productions and educational institutions.
  - Short-term goals including delivering micro credentials for creative workers, to addressing the immediate skills gap that has eventuated through a post-COVID filmmaking boom in Australia.
  - Long-term goals including future proofing educational and training pathways, to supporting dynamic and flexible industry demands through the offering of research training, post-graduate coursework, undergraduate degrees, diplomas and certificates.

- Support the production of world-leading Australian screen content, research and IP:
  - Connecting the educational investment of our population with longer term benefits that add cultural, social and economic value to the creation of high quality Australian content.
  - Focusing on the development of graduates who can tell Australian stories and secure Australian IP across innovative sectors.
  - Increasing funding for industry informed research partnerships that target innovation in the screen industries, enabling research translation.
  - Investing in further developing a sustainable screen education ecosystem that provides a national overview of educational and training pathways from graduation to sustainable screen careers.
  - Equipping future focused storytellers with entrepreneurial and screen business knowledge so they can be competitive in a global marketplace.

- A recognition that screen and media industries are a critical part of arts and culture and a national policy that appreciates the creative tensions between metropolitan and regional areas and recognises the opportunities for the sector is essential:

- Screen and media industries operate in commercial and non-commercial business structures, in capital cities and the regions, as pointed out in the research on *The creative sustainability of screen business in the Australian regions* (2020).
- Ensuring that screen and media industries become part of the national priorities, so that vocational and tertiary training can be targeted through the Job-ready Graduates package.
- The role that educational institutions play in educating and training future creative workers as creative specialists and embedded creative screen workers who offer transferable skills that contribute to the creative economy.

- The scale of education and training in the screen and media industries needs to be maintained so that cutting edge research can emerge through Doctoral and Masters programs across traditional and creative practice research. This is a longitudinal approach as it takes time to develop innovative practices and IP.

- Ensuring that we can continue to nurture creativity and wellbeing through educational pathways to professional practices.

CHALLENGES

Sustaining Australia's arts and cultural sector has valued and measurable social and economic benefits that relies on strong institutional foundations. Supporting screen and media programs means resourcing tertiary training so it can meet the challenges facing a twenty-first century workforce in a globally networked future. We see the main challenges as:

- Undergraduate fee increases for Arts and Humanities programs:
  - Creates asymmetries amongst STEM and HASS course pricing that distorts student choices and risks elevating student attrition levels in tertiary institutions.
  - The current fee structures make education in creative fields less attractive to lower socio-economic cohorts.
  - Impacts the ability for institutional and course re-building post-Covid.
  - Ignores proven innovation potential of Arts combining with Health and creative service sectors.

- Accessibility and Inclusion are also affected by fee increases:
  - The recent 2022 BFI study *What's Stopping Young People from Pursuing Careers in the Screen Industries?* found that for 13-15 year old's, the screen industries are perceived as a dream job, but inaccessible. Tertiary skillsets and training offers are a proven way to create pathways in and through the sector.
  - Greater equity of access amongst student cohorts required from both metropolitan and regional areas to shift cultural representations and workplace diversity reflecting contemporary Australia.

- Institutional Teaching and Staffing:
  - Recognising the changing face of the screen sectors and how new knowledge generated by educational institutions can support this.
  - Adopting academic performance metrics that reflect non-traditional research outputs of screen-based teaching and research.
  - Fostering longer-term staff planning and career development to support and retain our teachers and academics who are highly skilled at and experienced in supporting creative talent.
  - Reduction of institutional restructures promoting instability and job uncertainty.
  - Industry aligned curriculums supported by agile pedagogies to deliver job ready graduates with key knowledges and skillsets.
  - Forging stronger links between institutions and industry through Work Integrated Learning and internship initiatives.
  - Sustaining the broader Arts Sector through adequate institutional funding generating cross-sector robustness.

ACTION POINTS & CONCLUSION

Screen education institutions provide learning and teaching environments that foster and inspire the next generation of screen media and craft practitioners. As a vital part of a rich screen ecosystem these institutions respond to rapidly changing technologies while also presenting visions for the future of the sector.

This training allows students to find their creative voice, to develop industry awareness, and to cultivate a range of transferable skills that see them contribute across the broader cultural economy.
Screen education institutions also produce research on and through screen production, which examines industry trends and practices, and leads innovation in the sectors.

As such, it is imperative that these institutions are resourced to respond to rapidly changing production trends, and to support students from a range of cultures, backgrounds and regions, thus giving rise to stories that represent all Australians and equitable employment conditions and work cultures. Better recognition and reward for institutions means valuing the vital role of screen production education, educators and stable institutions.

We therefore call for:

- A review of costs associated with Commonwealth funded places for domestic students studying in creative areas (changes related to the Job-ready Graduates Package).
- Targeted funding and initiatives to support the movement of diverse talent through educational institutions and into industry.
- Increased funding and support for industry internship and traineeship programs run in partnership with industry and stronger links with national mentoring schemes for new practitioners.
- Review of WIL pathways and revision of related TEQSA standards.
- Review of policy or grants that support industry partnerships enabling capital investment in response to technological advances (including virtual production and other innovations).
- Increased funding for industry-informed research partnerships by increasing research training places (PhD's), thus supporting innovative research projects.
- Increased government support for peak bodies that might steer relationships between education and industry.
- Support for the development of cross-institutional frameworks enabling an effective 'skills development model'.

As educators and researchers, we look forward to the introduction of measures that support strong institutions and foster diverse screen stories and storytelling forms in Australia.