



RMITV submission for the proposed National Cultural Policy

About RMITV

Founded in 1987, RMITV is the oldest community television organisation in Australia. We are a not-for-profit that operates as a student television production facility at the RMIT University City Campus in Melbourne. We endeavour to help young, often first-time producers realise their goals and dreams in the complicated yet fulfilling area of television production.

We produce between 20-30 projects a year that primarily find distribution through Channel 31, Channel 44 and CTV+. These programs are anything from traditional broadcast television shows to short films, web-series, animated short films and outside broadcasts/live streams. We also allow aspiring journalists and critics to gain experience in writing reviews for upcoming film/tv releases. At the time of writing this, RMITV has 660 members, just over half of which are students at RMIT University.

Oftentimes, young filmmakers struggle to picture a clear career trajectory for themselves. The film industry is incredibly diverse and it requires a variety of individual disciplines to produce an end product. Our mission at RMITV is to provide the opportunity for students, or interested members of the public, to explore their passion in filmmaking and to have a better understanding of what direction they want to take their career. We offer access to state of the art television studios situated at RMIT, where creatives, who might otherwise never get the opportunity to do so, can pitch and create their own productions. Thus, RMITV creates a space where young filmmakers get the chance to succeed, fail and learn in a safe environment. This space is free of judgement and lacks some consequences you might have in the real world such as financial loss or the need to find a commercial audience. We are, put simply, a training ground for the next generation of storytellers and filmmakers.

RMITV has a long history of successful producers and practitioners moving into professional employment. Names such as Hamish Blake, Andy Lee, Rove McManus, Peter Helliar, Waleed Aly, Jo Stanley, Tom Ballard, Corinne Grant, Dilruk Jayasinha, Tommy Little, Vidya Rajan, Pat McCaffrie, Dave Thornton and many more. Our crew members have similarly made their way onto projects such as The Avengers, Game of Thrones, Chip & Dale: Rescue Rangers, The Castle, The David Letterman Show, The Project, as well as employment at Channel 9, Network 10, and the ABC.

Submission

In this submission, RMITV would like to address the neglect and abandonment of the Community Television sector by the previous government. For every year across almost a decade, we have been at the mercy of an 11th hour decision made by the Minister for Communications as to whether or not community broadcasters should stay on the air. There has been no long term plan for our industry set out by the Federal Government which has, as a result, irreversibly damaged Australia's cultural output. The Community Television stations for Sydney, Perth and Brisbane have all, as a result of this uncertainty, been made financially unviable and ultimately shut down. Without the community media organisations in this country acting as a necessary stepping stone into the workplace, we would likely not have any of the names mentioned above, nor any future unknowns who are on their way to similar heights.

Despite this ongoing uncertainty, RMITV itself is actually thriving. We have gained more than 200 members in the last 8 months and are now producing more shows than we ever have before. What this demonstrates is that there is life at the roots of the industry. Beginner filmmakers want to make content for Channel 31 and for CTV+. They want to engage with community media organisations such as RMITV. For such an insular and difficult industry to break into, community organisations give students and members of the public a place to learn by doing. This kind of learning is paramount to increasing jobs as employers will often hire based on experience, rather than qualifications.

With more attention paid to this sector by the Federal Government and a place on the broadcast spectrum being guaranteed into the future, this uptick in engagement would permeate through to the industry at large. We would see more Australian content being made for Australian audiences and an overall strengthening of our cultural identity as a nation. RMITV is a small, but necessary part of that process.

Recommendations

RMITV believes the following initiatives are crucial to ensure that Australia's cultural output is encouraged to grow:

1. Community Broadcasters such as Channel 31 and Channel 44 are given a secure place on the broadcast spectrum until a potential restack in the 2030s.
2. A content quota is placed upon international streaming services operating in Australia - detailing that 20% of their revenue earned in the country is to be used in producing local content, by local filmmakers.
3. An increase in funding to the Community Broadcasting Foundation.
4. Increased direct financial support for community media organisations.

RMITV confirms that this submission can be made public and that we're happy to answer any questions.

Bill Park
General Manager, RMITV

19th of August, 2022