

# National Cultural Policy Submission

## Goalpost Pictures

Submitted: On behalf of a for-profit arts business

### About Goalpost Pictures

Goalpost Pictures are among Australia's leading independent producers of award-winning feature films and television.

Goalpost recently wrapped production on the Stan Original Series, *Black Snow*, starring Travis Fimmel and filmed in North Queensland for All3 Media and Sundance Now. Goalpost are in post-production for Benjamin Millepeid's debut feature film *Carmen*, with original music and songs by three-time Academy Award nominated composer Nicholas Britell, produced with Chapter 2 and starring Melissa Barrera, Paul Mescal and Rossy de Palma. Concurrently, Goalpost Pictures are in post-production for Australia's first original feature film for Amazon Prime, *Five Blind Dates* directed by Shawn Seet.

Other film credits include the critically acclaimed hit, *The Sapphires*, which had its world premiere at Cannes Film Festival in 2012 and *The Invisible Man*, produced with Blumhouse for Universal, written and directed by Leigh Whannell and starring Elisabeth Moss, reached No.1 at the box office worldwide on its opening weekend in February 2020. For television, the award-winning drama series *Cleverman*, which had its world premiere at the 2016 Berlin Film Festival before broadcasting on ABC Television in Australia, SundanceTV in North America and BBC3 in the UK, the critically acclaimed four-part series for SBS, *New Gold Mountain*, which was the most watched drama series on SBS on Demand in 2021 and the BAFTA-nominated Tim Winton series *Lockie Leonard* for Channel Nine and BBC in the UK.

What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you? Feel free to respond to any or all pillars:

### First Nations

The stories of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are central to our unique culture. Goalpost Pictures continues to play an important role in bringing these stories of high cultural importance and value to audiences, both at home and abroad.

It is important that not only do we have the opportunity to see more of these stories on our screens, but that our First Nations creative practitioners have the opportunity to tell their stories themselves, from their own voice, language and culture.

The social and cultural dividend and opportunities from telling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories extends well beyond the that for the immediate producers, creatives, cast and crew involved but also reaches out to include the communities drawn into the production process, both directly as suppliers and indirectly through reinforcement of the importance of these stories to our culture.

Goalpost values culture and bringing stories to a national audience. Goalpost supports the *Uluru Statement of the Heart* and implementing a *Voice to Parliament*. Screen culture can assist by creating stories giving that give voice; assist with truth-telling and empowering First Nations to take their rightful place in Australia's cultural heritage.

Goalpost proudly works alongside First Nations creative practitioners and values and acknowledges the leadership of Tony Briggs, Ryan Griffen and Mirandas Tapsell for collaboration

on projects such as *The Sapphires*, *Cleverman* and *Top End Wedding*. Each of these projects was a collaboration between First Nations creative artists and non-Indigenous Australians and all connected with a wide audience and were showcased at a premiere international festival.

#### *The Role of Government & Agencies*

Goalpost acknowledges that without some form of government agency such as *Screen Australia* and other agencies many First Nations stories would not be reaching our screens. Australian public broadcasters have the obligation to play a key role to continue bring these stories to Australian audiences. Expanding these pathways into other broadcast platforms will help this sector to grow and find further audiences.

#### *Importance a "Terms of Trade"*

It is also of critical importance that the proprietary ownership in the creation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories is retained by First Nations story creators and producers and not taken offshore by global businesses without the safe guards that a genuine set of Terms of Trade could provide.

Goalpost has long endorsed the application of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) protocols that refer to all the rights that Indigenous people have, and want to have, to protect their traditional arts and culture.

**For the reasons outlined above, Goalpost believes it is important that a National Cultural Policy addresses the challenge of how to build on the successes to date of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander screen stories and ensure this continues into the future through increased support, strong institutions and funding opportunities.**

## **A Place for Every Story**

Australian screen stories are an important part of Australia's culture and should be seen on both broadcasting platforms and cinema screens that Australians access.

It is becoming harder and harder to produce Australian content, due to the mix of cost increases and competition for both market and public funding from both independent and Studio backed production companies. As a result Australian audiences are seeing fewer and fewer Australian stories on their screens relative to the total amount of content available, and coincidentally these stories are coming from fewer and fewer sources.

The recent relaxation of Australian content quotas has not supported the production of Australia scripted content. The summer of 2021 did see an increased to the Australian share of the Australian theatrical box office, however this should be seen as a welcome blip in a Covid disrupted market. This increase did highlight that Australians will support Australian films when they are in Australian cinemas.

**The challenge for the National Cultural Policy is to review and set government policy settings to impact an increase in Australian content available to Australian audiences on both small and large screens.**

#### *Value of Government Incentives*

Goalpost acknowledges the critical support for the screen industry through the Producer Offset, Location Offset and PDV Offset.

Screen Producers Australia (SPA) have detailed studies that show that this suite of incentives more than pays for itself in returns to the taxpayer. It is widely acknowledged that the economic value of telling Australian screen stories also extends to include inbound tourism and Australian brand promotion as well as the revenues and jobs they generate.

Importantly, the Producer Offset provides Australian screen producers with a valuable and

influential equity stake in the financing of productions, which of course should be protected through industry supported “terms of trade”.

Goalpost supports the Export Marketing Development Grant Scheme and would welcome the scheme’s retention as it supports the export of Australian Intellectual Property.

*Additional Government Support*

**Goalpost supports Screen Producer Australia’s position that an investment of 20% of major streamers Australian revenue being spent on newly commissioned Australian stories should be a public interest outcome in the new National Cultural Policy.**

**Goalpost also strongly supports the Australian Children’s Producer’s recommendation for a minimum 20% overall Australian content quota as per the Screen Producer Australia’s Policy. Critical to this for the Australian Children’s Screen Sector is a 20% sub-quota protection for new Australian commissioned children’s programming (i.e. 20% of the overall 20%).**

## **The Centrality of the Artist**

*The Important Role of Screen Producers*

The Australian screen industry supports a diverse range of occupations: creative, managerial and technical – all equally important as part of a creative team that bring Australian stories to our screens.

Goalpost is a screen producer and has operated as a business, an employer and a screen content creator of both feature films and television programs for the past 30 years. We continue to provide a platform for Australian artists to create, whether they be screen writers, directors, performers, cinematographers, designers or composers. We have long recognised that without their creative efforts we would have no content.

The principals of Goalpost are producers with significant creative expertise. They not only provide the infrastructure required for content creation, but their experience provides support and insight that enables the creatives to reach for excellence.

One of the keys to Goalpost’s success is a number of long-term relationships that have been built on openness. Whilst a business requires operational and contractual necessities, Goalpost’s producers stand side by side with our creative talent nurturing and collaborating always with a common goal.

Goalpost does take the burden of the business risks and is responsible for driving a creative project forward. We oversee the technical aspects of creating film and television content and run the process from start to finish – from identifying creative ideas, developing projects with writers, hiring the cast and director, financing, hiring crew, post-production and selling the final work, always aiming for the highest quality possible under the varied circumstances that prevail.

*“Terms of Trade” Framework Urgently Needed.*

During the past decade a number of Australian producers have received capital from US and European based Studios whilst others have ceased operations. The landscape of commercial competition has changed and, in many incidences, an uneven playing field has developed handing competitive advantages to the studio backed producers that are significantly more resourced.

**Goalpost supports Screen Producer Australia’s call for an open and fair set of Terms of Trade. We believe that in conjunction with any consideration of additional investment by streaming platforms or others, that Australia must urgently implement a “terms of trade” framework in order to maintain the sustainability and viability of our screen industry.**

## Strong Institutions

The Australian screen industry needs strong, stable and well-funded institutions to provide leadership and industry intelligence to the sector, to direct support and funding where market failure exists and to facilitate healthy domestic and international investment in Australian screen stories. These organisations must operate openly and with a transparency that encourages inclusivity and draw expertise from the industry in which they operate.

### *Independent Screen Sector as Cultural Institution*

Goalpost strongly supports SPA's argument that the Independent Screen Industry nationally should be considered an important cultural institution in its own right given the years of development of a nationwide set of SMEs and micro-businesses spanning the nation to support the pursuit of screen activity. Although diverse, the independent screen sector has a strong commonality of interest around securing good public policy that supports it to tell Australian stories and provide cultural value to audiences.

### *Review of Agencies and Bodies that Support the Sector*

The sector's primary screen-focused institution is Screen Australia is funded by the Federal Government to support the screen industry.

It has been some time since the roles of cultural agencies were reviewed by government and it is timely that this happens to ensure they remain relevant in supporting the needs of the industry in the rapidly changing media landscape.

**Goalpost supports a transparent review of Screen Australia and other bodies that are primarily funded by the Federal Government to support the screen industry would be of significant benefit to the screen sector, boost confidence and provide an opportunity to re-set and re-calibrate to support the needs of the industry for the future.**

## Reaching the Audience

Australian screen stories are the expression of Australian culture. Goalpost is proud that our content has reached a broad audience both in Australia and internationally. We are extremely proud that we have produced by content accessed in cinemas and a home. Screen culture offers one of the easiest and most accessible opportunities for all Australians to participate in and contribute to our culture.

### *Importance of Cinema*

Australia's screen institutions collect a significant level of data that has high market value. Commissioning platforms also have critical information that is rarely shared in meaningful ways with the production sector.

Whilst the majority of Australians access screen culture at home via free to air television and streaming services theatrical content remains the heartbeat of screen culture. Cinema brings people together, introduces them to a collective experience in a public space.

Goalpost supports the functions of content quotas for Australian content on Australian screens, and supports the universal industry call for their reinstatement. However this would be a return to normal programming and a change reversal that should have never happened in the first place.

**Goalpost knows that Australians love Australian films, they crave to see and hear themselves on the big screen. The new National Cultural Policy must include specific support for the development, production and marketing of Australian films.**

Locally produced children's content has a significant and positive impact on our collective national identity. It builds a sense of community and citizenship among the audience, contributes to our perceptions of Australian life, and creates shared childhood memories. Australian children should dream Australian dreams.

**The challenge for the National Cultural Policy is to find a way to acknowledge the importance of all pillars of screen content, and in the case of scripted content have a cultural broad view that includes television drama and feature films and content for children.**

Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why. Feel free to respond to any or all that are applicable to you:

### **First Nations**

Goalpost continues to collaborate with First Nations creatives and welcome new ideas and different approaches to creating Australian screen content.

### **A Place for Every Story**

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### **The Centrality of the Artist**

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Are there any other things that you would like to see in a National Cultural Policy?

*Screen industry capacity issues*

Goalpost is acutely aware of the industry wide crew shortage and urgent need for training and upskilling of the existing workforce as well as identifying effective pathways for new members of the industry.

Goalpost hopes that the *Jobs and Skills Summit*, the *Workforce Capacity Framework* being led by the Office of the Arts, AusFilm and others with SPA's contribution to the industry dialogue, will urgently address how industry can contribute more to training and skills development to help lessen these constraints.