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# **DEVELOPING A WESTERN AUSTRALIAN SCREEN INDUSTRY DIVERSITY PLAN**



A short paper to inform and stimulate discussion

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper presents the case for new strategic work to be undertaken by the Western Australian screen industry and Screenwest to develop a long-term Diversity Action Plan for the Western Australian screen industry.

Adopting a diversity perspective brings with it the challenge of developing strategic directions to address a broad spectrum of diversity within our society, most notably gender, cultural and linguistic diversity (CALD), disability, age; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI), socio-economic status, regional location and Indigenous concerns.

This discussion paper is based on a desktop scan of local, national and international literature related to diversity and is intended to stimulate discussion that will inform the development of a Western Australian Screen Industry Diversity Action Plan.

## DIVERSITY IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

West Australians are extraordinarily diverse. The people of Western Australia are more likely to be born overseas than the national average (31% compared to 28%, rising to 35% for Perth)<sup>1</sup>, slightly more likely to be Indigenous (at 3.1% compared to 3%).

Western Australia is the only Australian state besides the Northern Territory where men outnumber women (1.31million to 1.28million) – largely due to a dominance of men in mining areas such as the East Pilbara. In Greater Perth, where 79% of Western Australia's population live, the female population is much stronger.<sup>2</sup>

Western Australia's population has been boosted over time by long-settled migrants from post-war Europe (mainly Italy and Greece); traditional English speaking source countries (the United Kingdom, New Zealand and South Africa) and now countries across our region, including India, Malaysia, the Philippines and China. 270 languages are spoken in Western Australia, with non-European languages including Chinese and Indian / South Asian languages increasing in use while longer-established European languages are in decline. Almost 10,000 Western Australians, 13.5% of the State's Indigenous population, speak one of 50 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages at home<sup>3</sup>.

One in five or 405,500 Western Australians have a disability. 73% of Western Australians with a disability live in the metropolitan area and approximately one in every ten

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<sup>1</sup> Office of Multicultural Interests, Western Australia. *Cultural Diversity in Western Australia. A Demographic Profile* (October 2013).

<sup>2</sup>

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/3235.0Main%20Features352015?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=3235.0&issue=2015&num=&view=>

<sup>3</sup> Office of Multicultural Interests, Western Australia. *Cultural Diversity in Western Australia. A Demographic Profile* (October 2013).

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Western Australians is a carer of a person with a disability. By 2021 it is expected that the number of people with disabilities in the State will increase by 200,000; most of this increase can be attributed to the State's ageing population<sup>4</sup>.

Diversity in Western Australia is a lived reality of the contemporary community. Western Australia's screen content and screen practitioner community, however, do not fully reflect the State's diversity. This means that the talents, vision and stories of certain parts of the community are not making it to screen. Audiences are subsequently missing out on unique perspectives and potentially great content reflective of, and relevant to, the contemporary diversity of Western Australia.

## **DIVERSITY AND THE WA SCREEN INDUSTRY**

Like other agencies across the country, Screenwest tracks gender and Indigenous participation amongst 'key creative' screen workers (producers, writers and directors), but does not hold data around other forms of diversity i.e. CALD, disability, socio-economic status and LGBTQI participation.

### **Gender**

Screenwest's gender data show that women, while making a strong showing as producers (53%), are underrepresented as directors (20%) and writers (36%) on Screenwest funded projects. These figures are slightly better than Screen Australia's national average figures in relation to; for example, feature films, in which women tracked at 32% of producers, 23% of writers and 16% of directors between 2010 and 2015.

Over the past five years, the majority of Western Australian productions have been dominated by male-skewed storylines and/or male key talent. Screenwest management are also aware that there is a disparity in gender on production crews, although there is no available data on this.

Between 2010 and 2015, more applications to Screenwest came from men (54%, a ratio of 1.3 male to 1 female) although women were marginally more successful in their applications (60% success rate compared to 56% for men). This suggests that the issues are more systemic than a simple question of conscious or unconscious bias on the part of Screenwest assessors.

Broader industry dynamics create career barriers for women in the screen sector— as highlighted in Screen Australia's 2015 discussion paper *Gender Matters: Women in the Australian Screen Industry* – barriers include taking time out of the workforce for family and a dominance of men in decision making roles in both screen and related industries (such as distribution and advertising). Funding agencies have an important role to play in addressing these barriers, and local and international examples of proactive agency initiatives and targets tied to government funding have seen significant impact in this area (refer to the Key National Initiatives section below).

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<sup>4</sup> Disability Services Commission WA. *Count Us In! teaching resource package*

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## **Indigenous**

Indigenous elements are found on-screen in a relatively high number of productions funded through Screenwest. Screenwest has a long-standing planned approach to Indigenous participation, including the current *Screenwest Indigenous Screen Strategy 2016-20*, to ensure that the State's Indigenous screen industry continues to grow and develop, that there are clear career pathways for Indigenous filmmakers and that Indigenous stories are told on screen. This approach has yielded tangible results in supporting Western Australian Indigenous creative screen practice.

Indigenous key creatives are attached to approximately 20% of Screenwest supported productions. Most of these are specifically targeted initiatives through the *Screenwest Indigenous Screen Strategy 2016-21* and the Indigenous funding programs associated with this strategy.

## **Cultural and Linguistic Diversity**

No current data exist on levels of cultural and linguistic (CALD) diversity amongst Western Australian screen practitioners, but anecdotal evidence suggests low levels of participation. An initial review of Screenwest funded productions for the period 2013-14 to 2014-15, suggested that screen stories supported by Screenwest have limited identifiable multicultural elements and low levels of cultural diversity amongst key content creators and talent.

Screen Australia's *Seeing Ourselves* report tracked on-screen representation of characters from diverse backgrounds in all Australian television drama finding representation to be well behind population demographics (refer to the Key National Initiatives section below).

## **Disability**

There is no available data or information around screen practitioners living with a disability or on-screen representations of disability in a Western Australian content. Some recent examples of screen content in this area are seeing initial success, e.g. Daniel Monks' *Pulse*, but there are no active initiatives tailored to support talent or creative practice in this area.

## **LGBTQI**

No current data or initiatives exist in Western Australia (or nationally) to encourage participation by practitioners with non-straight sexualities or gender identities in the screen sector.

## **Age**

The majority of applications received by Screenwest are submitted by the 25-45 age group.

The largest portion of successful applications comes from the 45+ age group who had a 62% success rate. This may be a reflection of the level of skill, experience and ability to attach market to a project. The 45+ age group were followed by the 25-45 age group (n=835) who had a 57% success rate.

## **Regional**

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A large portion of Screenwest funded projects have a regional element. The inclusion of regional elements and regional production and participation will be further supported by the Royalties for Regions supported Western Australian Regional Film Fund which was launched in 2016. The Fund encourages regional film industry activity, the building of local capacity and contributes to the livability and vibrancy of regional Western Australian communities.

## THE CASE FOR CHANGE

Apart from identified diversity deficits in the sector, recent literature also makes a case for change in ensuring the screen industry is diversity-sensitive and inclusive. According to McClean's (2016) *Inclusive pathways framework for screen storytelling talent*, prepared for the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS):

*Australia's screen industries have a diversity problem. ... Despite the multicultural energy and complexity of our contemporary streets, audiences and society, the overwhelming majority of Australia's screen practitioners and decision-makers continue to be white and able-bodied and, in the senior levels of the industry, men. (2016:1)*

The paper goes on to say that this problem has multiple consequences such as commercial loss, as audiences turn to overseas material and limited innovation, as well as a disconnect with the storytelling potential of an increasingly diverse population. In a positive vein, the paper adds that these issues have also created a new momentum and appetite for change across the industry.

In Australia a strong case for change comes from Screen Australia's *Seeing Ourselves study*, described as the most significant study of diversity on Australian screens since television began in 1956. The research notes a strong link between on-and off-screen diversity. According to Graeme Mason, CEO of Screen Australia:

*Diversity on screens has been a hot topic in recent years locally and abroad, so in undertaking this milestone study, Screen Australia sought to empower the industry with a baseline of data that could become a springboard for change, ... Throughout the year-long process of completing this study, it is clear there is an appetite for change within the industry and for that change to be authentic rather than tokenistic. (2016:1)*

Apart from the specific imperatives coming for the screen industry, numerous other cases can be made for the need to address diversity and inclusivity.

**The human rights case ...** Some articulate the rationale for diversity in the screen sector as having a basis in human rights. Triggs (2015) links diversity to the broader social goals of equity, equality, social justice and human rights:

*Inclusive society is defined as a society for all, in which every individual has an active role to play. Such a society is based on fundamental values of equity, equality, social justice, and human rights and freedoms, as well as on the principles of tolerance and embracing diversity.*

Some of these rights frameworks are directly articulated, for example, Article 16 of the United Nations declaration of the rights of Indigenous Peoples states:

*Indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages and to have*

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access to all forms of non-indigenous media without discrimination.<sup>5</sup>

**Relevance to contemporary audiences ...** Many arguments are expressed in terms of the need for our screen content to reflect society to be relevant to contemporary Australian culture and audiences.

**The loss of talent ...** An inability to grapple with barriers to diversity means a consequent loss of talent. This is particularly relevant to the creative industries, including the screen industries, where creative talent is the major currency of the industry.

**Innovation and creativity** – The Human Rights Commission’s *Leading for Change: A blueprint for cultural diversity and inclusive leadership 2016* in partnership with businesses like Westpac, Telstra and PWC describes how stronger engagement with diversity generates greater innovation and creativity.

**The business case ...** Increasingly the argument is being made that maximizing the potential of diversity makes good business sense. In the screen context, this includes ensuring appeal to a broader market and audience for relevant screen content – known as the ‘diversity dividend’.

## KEY NATIONAL INITIATIVES

In the past 12 months, some key studies and initiatives in the Australian screen sector have sought to address the lack of diversity in the sector. They have included:

**Screen Australia’s Gender Matters** Discussion Paper and five-point plan (announced in December 2015), included Brilliant Stories – a broad call out for female-led creative stories; Brilliant Careers – business support to create industry infrastructure around women; Better Deals – distribution guarantee support; changes to assessment criteria to address career barriers; and compulsory attachments of female practitioners to projects funded over \$500,000. The suite of initiatives comprised \$5million over 3 years.<sup>6</sup>

**Screen NSW Gender targets** (announced in November 2015) to achieve an average 50:50 gender equity in its development and production funding programs by 2020. This was backed by a later requirement that all television drama series must include female key creatives on their team in order to receive development or production finance.

In November 2016, Screen NSW announced that the NSW screen industry is now on track to achieve gender parity across overall numbers in director, writer and producer roles by the end of 2016-17. Published figures on the first year of the target compared with 2014-

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/un-declaration-rights-indigenous-peoples-1>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/new-directions/gender-matters>

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2015 claim: across all genres and formats, female directors are attached to 46% of funded projects (up from 28%), female writers are at 48% (up from 30%) and female producers are at 67% (up from 56%).<sup>7</sup>

**Screen Australia research *Seeing Ourselves: Reflections on Diversity in TV Drama*** (August 2016) highlighted the low levels of on-screen representation. The study analysed all 199 dramas (excluding animation) that aired between 2011 and 2015 inclusive, finding only 18% of main characters in the period were from non-Anglo Celtic backgrounds, compared to 32% of the population. A notable exception to this trend is Indigenous representation, making a turnaround in screen presence, in 5% of characters, compared to 3% of the population. The study also found that only 4% of main characters had an identified disability compared to an estimated 18% of Australians, whilst 5% of main characters were identified as LGBTQI, yet this group is estimated to be up to 11% of the population.<sup>8</sup>

**The ‘ScreenAbility’ program** (launched in September 2016) a partnership between Screen NSW, AFTRS, AiMedia, Bus Stop Films and Carriageworks – which includes a new film festival around disability, a new short film initiative and brokered a significant number of company attachments for screen practitioners with a disability.<sup>9</sup>

**AFTRS/ The Gist – Inclusive Pathways Framework for Screen Storytelling Talent** (launched in November 2016) progressed research on international best practice in diversity strategies. Drawing on research and consultations with key screen industry stakeholders and practitioners – including those from underrepresented groups – the report identifies some key barriers to screen careers for women, CALD Australians, people living with a disability and LGBTQI communities. The report makes recommendations for change around practitioner initiatives, organisational diversity and industry-wide collaborative practice.

The *Inclusive Pathways Framework* document also summarises a range of Australian industry initiatives already underway in this space, noting good practice principles in program development, and identifying what is needed at each stage of career development.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.screen.nsw.gov.au/news/nsw-screen-industry-achieves-dramatic-increase-in-female-key-creatives-with-drama-projects-delivering-gender-parity-commits-from-july-1-50-of-feature-films-it-funds-will-be-written-or-directed-by-women>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/sa/newsroom/news/2016/mr-160824-study-of-diversity-on-tv-released>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.screen.nsw.gov.au/news/screenability-nsw-putting-disability-on-screen-and-behind-the-camera>

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## INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

The examples listed below are only some of the initiatives happening internationally – it is not intended to be an exhaustive list but to stimulate thought and discussion.

### [Sundance Diversity Initiative](#)

Sundance Institute has defined diversity as one of the core values driving the Institute's work. The Diversity Initiative at Sundance encompasses efforts of the organisation to reach into new communities of storytellers and audiences across regions, genres, ethnicities, gender and orientation.

The goals include deepening and expanding the connections to diverse communities, cultures, languages, and regions across the United States. In doing this Sundance hope to increase the diversity of projects submitted for consideration to all Institute programs, and inspire new artists to tell their stories.

### [Sundance Female Filmmakers Initiative](#)

Each year for the last 13 years, 25% of American directors at the Sundance Film Festival have been female. While markedly ahead of the mainstream marketplace where only 4% of the top 100 box office films are directed by women, the commitment to achieving diversity among storytellers is still a work in progress. For the health of our culture, the stories that frame our lives must be expanded to include the full range of storytelling voices.

The Sundance Institute have created the [Female Filmmakers Initiative Resource Map](#) which is a storehouse of the opportunities and programs available to United States based women filmmakers

[The National Film Board of Canada](#) (NFB) is committed to ensuring that at least half of its productions will be directed by women and half of all production spending will be allocated to films directed by women. This NFB commitment will be rolled out over the next three years, during which the public will be able to keep track of its progress through updates on the NFB's website, producing complete transparency in budgetary allocations.

In the 2015–2016 fiscal year, production spending on films directed by women at the NFB is roughly at parity, with 43.4% of production spending on films directed by women and 43.5% of spending on films directed by men, 11.3% of spending on films directed by a mixed team, and 1.8% of spending is not yet allocated. This is an increase on 2014–2015, when production spending on films directed by women was at 41.7% versus 47.8% on films directed by men.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup><http://nouvelles.gc.ca/web/article-en.do;jsessionid=4edebffddd7e0c72e19c92cafe522240b7ce50d0bd15d19faf18e269bff5064a.e38RbhaLb3qNe3aQb3f0?mthd=index&crtr.page=1&nid=1038939>



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### **BFI – 3 Ticks Diversity Initiative**

*“From 1 September 2014, using a new ‘three ticks’ approach developed by the BFI and designed to address diversity in relation to ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation and socio-economic status, all BFI Film Fund supported projects must demonstrate commitment to encouraging diverse representation across their workforces and in the portrayal of under-represented stories and groups on screen in order to be eligible for production funding.”*

The three ticks assessment requires applicants to demonstrate commitment to diversity across three areas of their production, ranging from the make up of the workforce to the stories and characters on screen, with at least one tick needed in a minimum of two areas for a project to be eligible for BFI production funding – the areas are listed below:

1. On-screen diversity: diverse subject matter, at least one lead character positively reflecting diversity, at least 30% of supporting and background characters positively reflecting diversity
2. Off-screen diversity: diverse key creatives (director, screenwriter, composer, cinematographer), at least two Heads of Department from diverse backgrounds, production crew and production company staff (both with a range of targets across different diverse groups);
3. Creating opportunities and promoting social mobility: paid internships and employment opportunities for new entrants from diverse backgrounds, training placements for people from diverse backgrounds, demonstrable opportunities for former trainees or interns to progress within their careers.

Deborah Williams is the appointed [Diversity Manager at the BFI](#).

In November 2015 the BFI announced the £1million BFI Diversity Fund to help inspire and provoke positive changes across UK film by providing professional development opportunities and supporting companies and organisations which show leadership in diversity. The BFI Diversity Standards (formally the ‘three ticks’ initiative) was recently enhanced and extended – applicants are required to:

- demonstrate how their project will succeed in tackling underrepresentation across four areas of their project;
- complete a diversity report at the end of each project, providing vital data from early development stages through to the delivery of the project.

Underpinning the BFI Diversity Standards is a new BFI definition of diversity: to recognise and acknowledge the quality and value of difference.

### **BBC**

Each BBC division is required to develop a Diversity Action Plan which sets out how they will meet their objectives against the BBC’s Diversity Strategy <http://www.bbc.co.uk/diversity/strategy>

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In Television the BBC focus on five key areas in its Diversity Action Plan:

- Section 1: Our output/our programmes - Objective: 'To better reflect the diversity of the UK across our programmes'
- Section 2: Our audience - Objective: 'Connect with our audiences, including our underserved audiences to inform the quality and direction of our output'
- Section 3: Accessibility - Objective: 'Build in accessibility from the start when developing new services'
- Section 4: Our workforce - Objective: 'Advance Equal Opportunities to diversity and develop our workforce and our senior leaders so that they better reflect our audience'
- Section 5: Our Business processes to support this plan – How we will manage diversity within Television processes - Objective: 'Systematic and consistent consideration of equality and diversity within BBC planning and review processes'.<sup>11</sup>

### **Norway & Sweden**

The Swedish Film Institute came up with an action plan three years ago, including points such as making women in film more visible, working with educational opportunities, and tracking decisions one by one not just annually. Activities include:

1. A new film portal in collaboration with the other Nordic Film Institutes: Nordicwomenfilmmakers
2. A new mentor programme for women, with established and first-time directors
3. Several projects with the aim of strengthening gender equality long-term in areas such as education establishments, competitions, film festivals, regional talent development and film camps. Initiatives to highlight female role models
4. Intensifying the ongoing monitoring of funding
5. A research project with the Swedish Film & TV Producers Association and the Royal Institute of Technology/Fosfor, to study the structures within the industry.

The policy shift pushed producers to rethink their projects and put forward more female directors. In a New York Times interview Anna Serner, Chief Executive of the Swedish Film Institute advised that "[t]he film business in this country is very dependent on our money," She added "[t]hey understood that if they wanted it, they would have to find women directors. And so they started finding them."<sup>12</sup>

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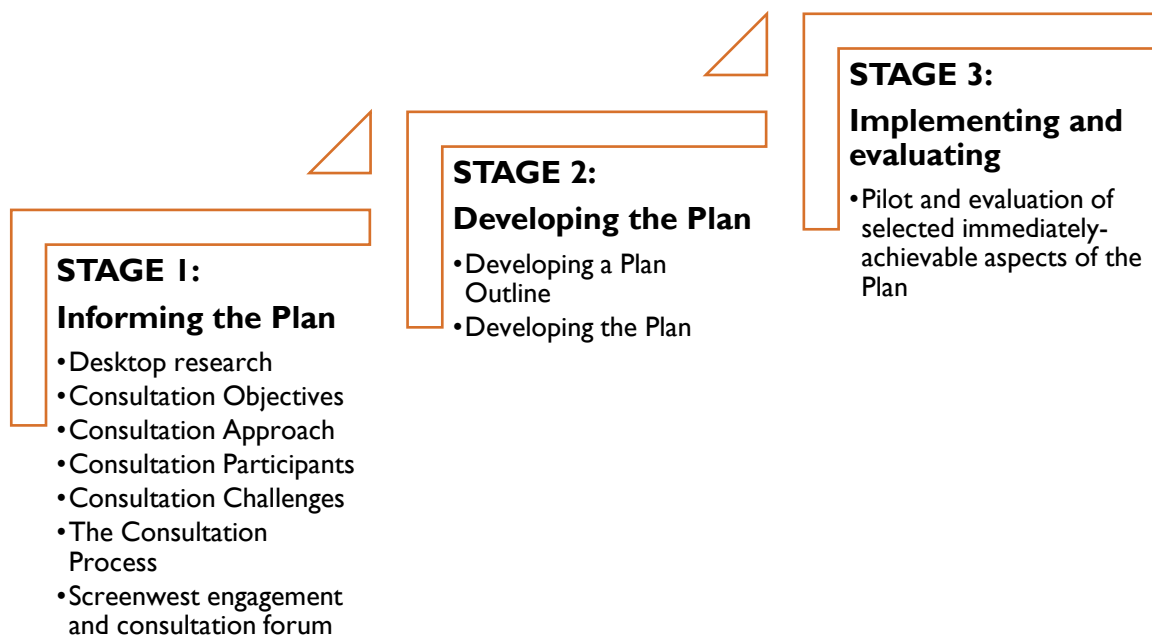
<sup>11</sup><http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/diversity/pdf/dap-tv-2015-16.pdf>

<sup>12</sup><http://www.screendaily.com/festivals/cannes/good-news-for-women-in-film-in-norway-sweden/5088442.article#>  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/08/arts/international/how-swedish-cinema-gave-women-directors-a-bigger-role.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/08/arts/international/how-swedish-cinema-gave-women-directors-a-bigger-role.html?_r=0)

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## THE WAY FORWARD

Driven by Fortis Consulting, the development of the Western Australian Screen Industry Diversity Plan is based on a three-stage, grounded participatory approach.



This discussion paper is the outcome of the initial Stage I desktop research and will inform the consultation objectives and the extensive consultation process itself. The consultation is expected to involve a range of people across diversity groups and will target:

- Screen industry stakeholders (e.g. key creatives, cast and crew, screen training institutions, Screenwest representatives and other screen industry stakeholders)
- Non-industry stakeholders (e.g. diversity group representatives and other identified non-industry groups).