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Actors, directors, screen crew encouraged to have their say in film and television inquiry

Ensuring local content on digital platforms and updating screen tax incentives are essential for the growth and sustainability of the film and TV industry, says the union representing performers and screen crew.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance welcomes the opportunity to put positive reforms on the table at a new parliamentary inquiry into the growth and sustainability of the Australian film and television industry.

MEAA chief executive officer Paul Murphy said the union will make a submission to the inquiry which proposes a range of sensible reforms and will work with producers and other groups where there is common ground.

The union is encouraging anyone who works in the industry whether in front of or behind a camera to have their say by using a special submission tool set up on the MEAA website.

Murphy said MEAA will use the inquiry to draw attention to important issues affecting MEAA members such as ensuring local content on digital platforms, maintaining opportunities for local cast and crew on local productions, restoring Screen Australia funding to 2013-14 levels, improving our screen tax incentives, and the survival of children's television.

"The combined effects of more than \$400 million in cuts to funding of the ABC and SBS, Screen Australia and the Australia Council are yet to be fully felt, but this funding needs to be restored," he said.

"There needs to be permanent increases to the tax offsets and rebates that encourage offshore and local film and TV production, and an extension of Australian content minimums to new platforms, such as online streaming services."

Murphy warned the inquiry must not be used as a smokescreen for cuts to the wages and conditions of Australian performers and crew.

"Our actors and crew are recognised as being among the best in the world," he said. "We whole heartedly welcome any attempts to improve the vibrancy and sustainability of our screen sector, but this shouldn't mean an attack on workers' rights."

While welcoming the inquiry, Murphy expressed skepticism about the Turnbull government's willingness to undertake any meaningful changes in the sector.

He said a new push by commercial television to abandon content rules, including in the already marginal area of children's content, were a sad reflection of Government inertia.

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“It’s time that our federal Communications Minister laid out some sort of vision so that our \$3 billion film and TV industry had some kind of insight into whether there will be policy settings that encourage new drama or whether we will all have to binge on low-cost reality TV for the rest of our days.

“If the existing vacuum continues, we can kiss goodbye to the creators, the actors and the crew that keep delivering for Australian viewers.”

MEAA is encouraging workers in the sector to participate in the inquiry by either making a submission or contributing to the union’s submission.

A submission tool has been created on the MEAA website to make the process as easy as possible. Find out more at meaa.org/screen-inquiry

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