



20 June 2016
Mr Paul Murphy
Chief Executive Officer
Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance
PO Box 723 Strawberry Hills
Sydney NSW 2012

Dear Mr Murphy,

Thank you for your communication of 9 June 2016 on behalf of the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) regarding policy and funding requests in the arts and creative industries.

A Shorten Labor Government will restore the essential role of the arts and creative industries to their rightful place in Australia's cultural and economic life.

The arts are not just important for Australians as an avenue for creativity – thousands of jobs also depend on them. They are worth our support.

However, the Abbott-Turnbull Government has delivered nothing but chaos and cuts for the arts and creative industries.

Mr Turnbull as Communications Minister oversaw more than \$250 million in brutal cuts to the ABC.

In addition to \$140 million in cuts from the Australia Council, since the 2013 election this Government has cut:

- \$38.7 million from Screen Australia.
- \$33.8 million from Arts Ministry programs.
- \$36.8 million from museums and galleries.

In the 2015 Budget the Abbott-Turnbull Government ripped \$105 million from the Australia Council, trashing the model of independent, peer-reviewed funding for the arts in the process. It then used these funds to create a ministerial slush fund, *Catalyst*. This is wrong – arts funding should never be a political plaything of the government of the day.

MEAA, along with other organisations, has played an important role in highlighting the impact that the Abbott-Turnbull Government's cuts are having on the arts and creative industries in Australia. Labor has a plan to fix the damage to the arts sector wrought by the Abbott-Turnbull Government.

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A Shorten Labor Government will restore the Australia Council's ability to make independent funding decisions and support the small and medium arts organisations across the country that make the arts accessible to all Australians.

A Shorten Labor Government will close the *Catalyst* fund and return all remaining unspent money to the Australia Council. We will also boost the Australia Council by providing \$20 million a year in new funding over four years from 2017.

Labor acknowledges the enormous damage done to the Australian screen industry by the Abbott-Turnbull Government's ignorance, neglect and repeated cuts.

Labor has already announced that it will provide \$60 million to the ABC for local drama production. This injection of funds will help to foster creative skills development for Australian writers, producers and actors and will help to reinvigorate the local screen industry that is still suffering from the savage cuts imposed on the ABC by the Abbott-Turnbull Government.

This boost to our ABC will deliver an estimated 30 hours a year of high quality ABC programming. Recent successful examples like *Rake*, *The Code*, *Janet King*, *Redfern Now*, *Anzac Girls* and *The Beautiful Lie* have shown how powerful local drama can be in expressing the national character.

Over the last two years Labor has also been consulting extensively with local screen producers, crew members, actors, writers, directors and the numerous companies that support this vital creative industry.

It is clear new policies to support our screen industry in a rapidly changing environment require a holistic and integrated approach that takes into account a wide range of matters, including:

- Whether and in what ways the Producer Offset should be changed to account for the fact that the requirement for 'theatrical distribution' to access the 40 per cent offset no longer accords with the rise of high quality Australian television production and the alternative distribution channels being used today.
- The appropriate level for the Location Offset given the increasing international competition and the opportunities Australia has with a lower dollar to leverage our skills and facilities to bring large foreign productions to our shores.
- The constantly evolving role of Screen Australia and appropriate level of funding it needs to fulfil that role in supporting our screen industry.
- Whether any changes should be made to local content requirements for commercial broadcasters.
- The impact of changing technologies on our screen industry, and the best way to harness any opportunities that may arise from these technologies, such as the rise of streaming services.

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Labor recognises the vital cultural and economic role that the screen industry plays in Australia, and a Shorten Labor Government will consult closely with the industry, including MEAA, to finalise a comprehensive set of arrangements to ensure that our screen industry prospers.

More detail on Labor's positive policy - Creative Industries, Creative Country - may be found at http://www.100positivepolicies.org.au/creativeindustries_creativecountry

Thank you for taking the time to write on these important issues.

Yours sincerely,

ALP Information Services Unit

Australian Labor Campaign Headquarters

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