



MEDIA RELEASE

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Big names call for action to protect Australia's screen culture

Dozens of Australia's best-known and most successful actors, directors, screenwriters, producers and production crew – including 15 Oscar winners – have penned an open letter calling on the nation's parliamentarians to protect the local screen industry and to act now to ensure it thrives into the future.

Actors **Cate Blanchett, Sam Neill, Rose Byrne, Joel Edgerton, Deborah Mailman** and **Richard Roxburgh**, directors **Nadia Tass, Peter Weir, Philip Noyce** and **Gillian Armstrong**, screenwriters **David Williamson, Ben Elton, Andrew Knight** and **Jan Sardi**, producers **Penny Chapman, John Edwards** and **Michael Tear**, Academy Award-winning costume designer **Lizzy Gardiner**, editor **Alexandre de Franceschi**, Oscar-winning production designer **Catherine Martin**, cinematographer **Mandy Walker** and Academy Award-winning production sound mixer **Ben Osmo** are among more than 215 signatories to the open letter.

It has been released amid fears that the Turnbull Government is planning to slash the local content quotas for television drama and children's television.

The letter has been compiled under the banner of Make It Australian, a joint campaign spearheaded by the Australian Directors' Guild, the Australian Writers' Guild, the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance and Screen Producers Australia.

In the letter, the signatories urge politicians to commit to growing the screen industry and ensuring it can compete internationally.

"Our ability to keep telling Australian stories on screen is at risk, our voices in danger of being drowned out by a deluge of overseas content," they write.

"And if our nation's stories aren't told, they die. And when they die, future generations won't know who we are and what makes us us."

They are calling on politicians to help the screen industry in three ways:

- To evolve Australian content rules so they cover new media like Netflix, Amazon, Telstra TV, telcos and ISPs;
- To introduce competitive tax incentives so Australia can compete globally for film and TV productions;
- To ensure public broadcasters and screen agencies are well-funded so they can continue commissioning ground-breaking new content.



The organisations behind the Make It Australian campaign are concerned that the Turnbull Government is planning to reduce or abolish the local content quotas for drama and children's television.

There has been bipartisan consensus in support of the quotas since the 1970s, but the free-to-air commercial TV networks have lobbied for them to be axed.

Already over the past three years, investment in Australian drama by commercial broadcasters has fallen by 30%, and if their reduced quota model had been in place in 2016 it would have meant a loss to the industry in that year of 40% of drama hours, \$125 million in budgets, and 3500 jobs. Similarly, abolishing children's quotas would mean no Australian children's content on commercial television.

The Make It Australian campaign is also calling for reform to the tax incentives for the screen industry, including harmonising the producer offset at 40% and increasing the location offset from 16.5% to 30%.

The full open letter is available at makeitaustralian.com/news/open-letter

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