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## **Government needs to show it values our film and TV industry**

Australia's \$3 billion film and television industry needs greater leadership and support from the government to demonstrate the arts are valued in this country, says the union for performers and screen crew.

In its submission to a parliamentary inquiry into the Australian film and TV industry, the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance is calling for government leadership through standardised production and location offset rebates, the restoration of funding to the Screen Australia agency, and a revamp of local content rules to rope in streaming video platforms.

The production offset should be a standardised 40% across film and TV, while the location offset should be increased to 30%. These changes would provide greater certainty for offshore studios when planning investments in Australia.

MEAA is calling for the restoration of Screen Australia's funding to 2013-14 levels – at least \$100 million a year.

Existing Australian television content rules must remain in force and be extended to new players like Netflix, Amazon and Stan.

MEAA is also proposing a new Australian Content Fund and for any spectrum licence fee reductions to be tied to increased investment in local TV content. Additionally, reality television programming should be given less weight in terms of Australian content points and hours than drama and comedy.

The roles of the ABC and SBS in commissioning and supporting Australian made drama and comedy must also be protected.

MEAA chief executive officer Paul Murphy said the film and TV industry contributed \$3 billion to the Australian economy, employed more than 30,000 people and played a critical role in reflecting our society and telling our stories.

But too often it was not supported by governments of all persuasions, he said.

"Our industry depends not only on dedication of craft, encouragement of story-tellers and willing investors; it also depends on governments and regulators that value the industry and are prepared to assume a guardianship role for its overall success," he said.

"We don't seek a government that controls film and television. But we do want one that recognises the inherent and often intangible value of our screen industry and will back it in to be the best in the world."

As part of its submission, MEAA gathered comments and feedback from more than 100 actors, directors, producers, screen technicians and other members working in the industry.

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An overall theme that emerged was how precarious jobs and pay in the industry are, and how a more interventionist approach from government can overcome some of that uncertainty and insecurity.

“Our members have told us gut-wrenching stories about how difficult it is to earn a decent income from the film and TV industry, with some people who have invested their entire lives in their passion questioning whether they can continue,” Mr Murphy said.

“This is especially the case with screen crew, who are currently campaigning for an industry agreement with enforceable market rates of pay and annualised cost of living increases.

“But actors also are frequently forced to seek work outside the industry to boost their meager earnings from intermittent work in the chosen craft.

“MEAA welcomes the opportunity to have contributed to this inquiry and looks forward to engaging with the government to ensure we have a thriving film and TV industry well into the future,” Mr Murphy said.

The MEAA submission is available at <https://www.meaa.org/mediaroom/meaa-submission-to-the-2017-house-of-representatives-inquiry-into-the-film-and-tv-industry/>

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