

**Fiona Press**  
freelance actor

I am an award-winning, six year-trained, freelance actor of 37 years experience who works principally in screen. I am currently appearing in a long-running ABC drama that has recently been sold to the BBC. At 2 x 4 month production periods, it is the longest-running engagement I have ever had.

Thanks to the living wage made possible by MEAA's television agreement, I was able to save sufficiently to be able to leave my place in the Covic Centrelink queue for someone more needy - probably a fellow arts worker.

This engagement would very likely not have existed without the existence of Australian screen content quotas. While not directly applicable to the ABC, they underpin the circumstances that keep everyone in the Australian screen industry engaged, creative and employed and work-ready to make such a success story as ours - our dozens of writers, the independent production house, the actors sufficient to play 123 speaking roles in series 1 alone, the carpenters and set-dressers, the prop-makers, lighting technicians, cinematographers and focus-pullers, the costume buyers and hundreds more in dozens of skilled occupations.

The cultural value of our industry to Australia will be argued elsewhere; as will its dependence upon strong and equitable content quotas that reach across all platforms. The precise nature of the quota models will also be argued elsewhere. But my argument is personal.

It's about my job and the retention of my skill - making it, keeping it; retaining highly professional experienced creative personnel like me in Australia and at the ready for the international productions that come here precisely because of people like me. I've built a sustainable and successful career on being exceptionally 'useful': flexible, innovative, collaborative, self-sufficient, adaptable. Australian

screen-makers of all occupations are renowned internationally for these characteristics, are the reason for our success when working overseas and are the reason overseas productions come here. Those workforce characteristics have a quantifiable monetary value to both local and international screen economies. We punch a very long way above our weight and are known for it.

These valuable characteristics only exist because they are forged and sustained by the uniquely Australian character of our local industry. Without a critical mass of Australian production, these skills and the personnel who exercise them will disappear. Our unique workplace ethic and its concomitant economic efficiency will dwindle to the point where Australia's attractiveness to international production will vanish, along with the people who sustain it. We can't remain uniquely efficient and imaginative in our Australian way if our only work is under the thumb of the big budget, strictly hierarchical US studio model. They may as well stay at home if they are not going to get the benefit of who and what we are. Won't matter how low our dollar goes, we will end up de-skilled and valueless.

The imbalance in the ecology of Australia versus international screen markets is well known. It will always be more expensive to produce content here than overseas purely because of the limits of local recoupment. That's why the quotas. To protect culture, sure; to protect Australian stories, history and voices, sure; to provide the most powerful and sometimes only platform for First Nations people of this country to assert their identity, their survival and their ancient storytelling tradition, sure - strong and equitable local content quotas do all of this. But to be the foundation, substance and sustenance of an entire economic ecology is their main purpose and undeniable benefit. The only way the quotas can continue to do this is:

- both broadcasters and digital platforms like Netflix and Stan should be required to produce Australian content, including scripted and documentary programs — they profit from Australian audiences, they should invest in Australian stories and jobs
- tax incentives should be updated to become internationally competitive and applied equally across platforms, with additional support for culturally significant programming, like kids - support content across platforms and bring more work to Australia
- funding for public broadcasters and screen agencies to be increased so they can continue to invest in our industry, and support Australian jobs
- preserve and strengthen sub-quotas that create opportunity for scripted content in adult drama as a priority; any option that does away with or weaken the sub-quotas is as good as death knell for the employment creation and skill retention in this industry.

Australian content on Australia television screens - no matter what the platform - doesn't only exist because audiences want it. It exists because the playing field

between us and the larger English-speaking markets can never be level and quotas are the earth-movers that shift the ground and make the game fair. They keep me and my fellow technicians and artisans - journeymen and women, tradies every one of us - in work and making a lot of money for this country.

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**I wish for my submission to be anonymous:** No

**I wish for my submission to be private:** No

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**Supporting documents:**

*This submission has been lodged via the [Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance](#).*