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Re. Supporting Australian stories on our screens—options paper

None of the models proposed go far enough to address the historic imbalance between support for traditional and interactive storytelling.

There has been a catastrophic failure of imagination in Australia around what a "modern, multi-platform environment" can and should look like. The options tabled by Screen Australia reflect silo'ed thinking and an old fashioned view of the world that treats interactive entertainment makers as second-class citizens when it comes to funding and support. This is an economic and cultural mistake.

Model 3 could benefit studios like Mod, and our wider virtual team of local practitioners, if "all platforms" includes all interactive platforms - i.e. the offset applies to games and other interactive storytelling titles. Mod is a 10 year old studio with a team producing interactive content and technology for decades without access to the subsidies available to film/TV producers. In theory we are part of the Australian media and entertainment industry (e.g. our work was cited in the application to make Sydney a UNESCO City of Film) but in practice we rely on overseas revenue and support.

The most important content industry reforms needed right now are:

- 1) extend the Producers Offset to cover all forms of media & entertainment to make interactive and virtual productions more economically viable to local investors. This will have a flow-on effect in supporting traditional film / TV / radio / theatre industries as we employ skilled practitioners from all these areas.
- 2) implement more aggressive affirmative action across the media & entertainment sector to ensure that the diversity of Australian content creators and the voices of minorities and people of colour are far better represented. This will result in more engaging content that is relevant to more people.

Whatever the future balance between traditional linear and interactive content, not having local interactive entertainment producers incentivised to produce Australia content obscures the reality of modern media consumption and production.

There need not be artificially enhanced disincentives for having a local interactive media and entertainment industry. This is in effect what Screen Australia provides and frames -



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valuable for the traditional sector but re-arranging deck chairs on the Titanic for the bigger picture.

At a time when the global game industry has experienced a spike in demand no Australian content conversation should be excluding interactive entertainment. Yes, there is a generation of "screen" decision makers who "don't get games" and they would be sidelined if policies were reframed to give others a voice. But there is also deep local knowledge of how a more equitable and lucrative media landscape could operate with support to both linear and non-linear formats. There have been no shortage of government submissions over the years. It is time to stop paying lip service to a key future driver of the economy.

Referring to Facebook and (Google) YouTube as the lens, THE platforms, through which "innovative and interactive formats" will appear is misguided and dangerous. Australians will build both the content AND the platforms if policies incentivise these.

Support the interactive studios creating the media and technology that powers modern storytelling and you will generate more investment into Australian interactive AND traditional content. Development is expensive but successful storyworld development leads to IP that can work across silo'ed media sectors.

Australian interactive content teams continue to produce world class content despite the lack of industry support. Many are suppliers - as Mod is - to the global market - from Australia - despite a lack of local interest in the tools and methods used, because they do not fit the traditional narrative of what "story" and "content" means today.

Yes, COVID19 was not predictable but the uptake in non-traditional platforms and experience formats was entirely predictable. As was this crisis impacting traditional sectors.

For more information on our Australian storytelling, visit <https://mod.studio>

Best regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melange'.

Co-founder and CEO
Mod