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ABN: 16 008 278 037

Dear Senators

I am writing to you to support the swift review and passage of reforms to the Location Offset. It is very important that this legislation is reviewed and passed as soon as possible. I am requesting that the Committee conduct its review during April and finalise its report in early May. This would build confidence in the reform and support Australian jobs and businesses that work across international productions.

I am Dale Roberts, the Managing Director of KOJO, a business that is headquartered in Adelaide with offices in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Hobart, Perth and Townsville. We were established in 1991 and currently employ 124 people. Our recent work includes Woody Woodpecker, I am Mother, Talk To Me and we are now in post-production and VFX on Desert Kings.

This submission relates to provisions of the Treasury Laws Amendment (Delivering Better Financial Outcomes and Other Measures) Bill 2024 that will reform the Location Offset, and not other provisions in the bill.

The Location Offset is important for the local industry

Government support is critical for Australia's screen industry and enables us to develop the capacity to tell world-class screen stories. The Location Offset is a foundational part of the Government's support.

By attracting international film and TV projects to shoot in Australia, the Location Offset generates work and training opportunities for Australians in front and behind the camera create significant spend for local post-production and digital and visual effects companies, and trigger business investment into capabilities that are then used on local screen stories.

International productions are very important for our business. Importantly, our work on international titles has directly benefitted Australian stories and the local sector. For example, Pope's Exorcist, Teen Wolf Movie and Mortal Kombat.

We support the reforms to the Location Offset

We were delighted when the Government announced it would increase the Location Offset rebate to 30 percent. The peaks and troughs of international production have made it very difficult for us to properly plan and grow. A 30 percent Location Offset will support a long-term pipeline of international production. We are hoping to continue to expand our business nationally and build our full-time workforce well beyond the current 120 headcount.

The reforms have been drafted by Government via a detailed consultation process throughout 2023 and early 2024, and we support the bill in its current form.

Swift review and passage would support the industry

It is very important that these reforms are reviewed and passed as soon as possible. Industrial disputes in Hollywood stopped international production for most of 2023. Because screen productions are complex and have a long lead time, the industry is still recovering. Many Australian workers and businesses lost several months of income. Our business experienced significant disruption during the strikes in 2023 with the ongoing impacts continuing to this day.

These stoppages disrupted the entire industry and reduced the risk tolerance of international studios, streamers, and independent filmmakers. Our contacts have told us that international productions are reluctant to commit work to Australia until the legislation is passed. This is creating a further gap in work for businesses and workers still recovering from the impact of earlier challenges. The impact of this gap will grow as uncertainty extends.

We are conscious that the Parliament has many issues to consider, but are requesting that the Committee will conduct its inquiry as soon as possible. Specifically, we request that the inquiry report as soon as possible, potentially in early May, with a recommendation to pass the Location Offset reform.

This would build confidence in the reform and support the workers and businesses that work across international productions.

We have seen that some members of the Committee have discussed the Location Offset reform in association with the Government's plans to introduce content obligations for streaming services. We appreciate that content obligations are a very important issue for the industry. However, content obligations are a separate issue to the Location Offset. We are also concerned that content obligations are complex and may require a long time for Parliament to resolve, while the Location Offset is a long-standing measure that has support across the Parliament. Any delays to Location Offset reform will impact local jobs and businesses now, and into the future.

This Location Offset reform has broad support from the industry, and has been through detailed consultation. It has been recommended by previous Parliamentary Inquiries in 2017 and 2019. It was announced in the 2023 Budget and we are hoping it can be passed as soon as possible, to provide a real boost to Australian workers and businesses. We appreciate the Parliament's history of collaborative support for the screen sector, and are encouraging this to continue through support for this bill.

As you know, Ausfilm is a unique partnership between private industry and government. We have been Ausfilm members since 2015 and I encourage you to contact Ausfilm and myself with any questions. Please contact me via email at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

Yours faithfully,

[REDACTED]

28 March 2024