

Good Afternoon,

[REDACTED]

In my view, the Australian Industry is lagging behind in terms of arts, especially in Television and Film markets. As an actor, I have faced more tokenism and bad representation than I would care to admit, and as a screenwriter, I have been constantly barred from creating my own work to better representation due to funding limitations and the perception of what is 'wanted' by the Australian Public.

As a member of a low-income household and living in rural Victoria, opportunities have been limited as is. However with the addition of COVID-19, things have been even harder. Budget cuts to funding bodies and companies like the ABC, means that opportunities for up and coming creatives are becoming more limited. This paired with a pandemic, means that I have spent the last six months living in financial difficulties and relying on other income streams to survive.

In my view there are three things going forward that need to be done to improve Victoria's economy for all aspects of on-screen media. I have listed these below.

1. Better entries into the arts.

The insular and almost clique like nature of the Australian Arts scene means that there are very little opportunities for up and coming writers like myself. If I don't know the right people, I can't get the opportunities, and there is no way to know the right people, except to be facilitated into the industry, and unfortunately as someone without connections, this is impossible for me. I would ask that local and federal funding agencies become aware of this and increase funding to smaller, local based productions with rural opportunities and low production webseries for streaming sites.

2. More local productions.

As an actor, I would be remiss to leave out the importance of local productions. More than bringing productions from abroad to Australia, creating more local productions is a better long term plan for the industry. Why? Because productions from abroad will only hire those already established in the industry. The odds of a young actor from Australia being hired or a relatively unknown young screenwriter having the opportunity to join these productions is very little. In contrast, 90% of my auditions, or invitations into writers' rooms have been local productions. People in Australia wanting to boost Aussie talent. Living in a low-income part of the state, this also gives me greater ability to be seen, and further opportunities. In addition to these reasons, borders being closed for the foreseeable future in Victoria, means that local productions are my only option.

3. Private Funding.

When I realised that my odds at getting funding were low, I turned to private funding. I believe it would ease the financial burden of the government greatly if you were to provide possibilities of private funding to young up and coming creatives. These can be not for profits, institutions and other such companies that would be pleased to accept submissions for private funding. If this list was available on Screen Australia, you would find yourself receiving far fewer submissions.

4. Remove diversity boxes from funding

I would also ask that the diversity box be removed from Screen Australia's funding. I understand the reason behind this box, but it delegates me to being a 'box to tick' instead of a real person with real stories. It also perpetuates tokenism as it encourages Caucasian writers to write south Asian characters without consultants, and then actors like myself are forced to play inauthentic characters, which we can't speak up about in fear of losing our jobs. It's a terrible cycle and I would ask that authenticity be taken into consideration when deciding on funding, not just the number of diverse characters. In addition, a possible idea of low-level funding for new creatives with diverse stories could be created. This way, better representation would be available in Australian screens.

As people of colour, we are aware of other people of colour in the industry and with greater lower level funding initiatives, we would easily be able to boost each other up to a point where we share greater foothold in the industry.

As a person of colour, who is struggling in the current landscape of the arts in Australia, I am grateful that the Government has taken the time to consider the arts in this pandemic. In my view, if there was a comprehensive cultural policy on the arts, it should be authentic, and allow for organic, long-term change. This can be done by simply boosting creative voices behind the scenes to allow for better representation from culturally diverse people. We have a plethora of stories to tell, but no space in funding, or media in Australia to put it. Please consider creating new funding pathways specifically for culturally diverse storytellers, most of us are unknown, and we find ourselves feeling like unwanted outsiders in an industry that has effectively made us a box to tick.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read through this list of submissions. I hope to see some valuable changes in the future.

Kindest Regards,