

I am writing in regard to the proposed changes to the Australian Screen Production Incentive.

While I applaud the Producer Offset rate for non-feature productions from 20 per cent to 30 per cent, I am opposed to other aspects of the proposed Bill. In particular:

- 1) The increase in the threshold for feature length content supported through the Producer Offset from \$500,000 to 1 million
- 2) Removing the claim to production costs incurred in other countries towards the Producer Offset

In relation to point 1, by raising the QAPE threshold from \$500,000 to 1 million means the door to finance will firmly be shut to the majority of documentary filmmakers going forward. The vast majority are made for budgets less than \$1m and will no longer be eligible for the Producer Offset.

I have worked as a documentary filmmaker for the past 15 years. The Producer Offset supported me to make several of films including my current feature ABLAZE which has a budget of \$600k. The film told the story of Aboriginal community in Victoria, through a profile of a leading member of that community William Onus, The documentary has tremendous historical importance, and contains interviews with Aboriginal elders whose voices have never been recorded. ABLAZE, through our distributor Umbrella films, will reach audiences around the country through festivals/cinema release/TV broadcast/community screenings.

If implemented, these changes will prevent many important, quality documentaries that capture our unique Australian stories (for a local and global audience) such as ABLAZE from being made. This will be especially devastating in relation to Indigenous story-telling. I find it hard to believe that Parliament could possibly support such a move.

Apart from Increasing the Producer Offset minimum QAPE I am also deeply concerned about a number of other proposed changes which have the potential to devastate documentary feature film and core strands of documentary television production in Australia. Removing the Gallipoli Clause, which permits some costs (such as Australian crew wages) incurred outside of Australia to be claimed as QAPE will disproportionately affect documentary producers who are filming international stories from an Australian perspective. The popular series *Surgery Ship* is one pertinent example.

In summary, the proposed changes – especially Increasing the threshold for QAPE would effectively wipe out a significant proportion of documentary films that are already proving their quality and appeal in Australia and around the world. Documentaries occupy a unique place in our cultural landscape; offering entertainment, historical record and artistic expression while presenting distinctive Australian stories, told by Australian voices. Their unique status is reflected in the way they are made; over many years, in a range of places and often on modest budgets – a distinctly different form of production to any drama feature films and cannot be treated in the same way.

**TOM ZUBRYCKI**