

Submission to

The Australian House of Representatives'

*Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts:*

**Inquiry into factors contributing to the growth and sustainability  
of the Australian film and television industry, (2017).**

On: Creativity

27th March 2017

The following submission briefly addresses the three terms of reference (ToR) of *The inquiry into factors contributing to the growth and sustainability of the Australian film and television industry*. The aim is to point the Committee to key issues for consideration, to recent research where appropriate, and to present some available data. The submission is in three sections:

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE MAIN POINTS:

- Creativity is complex, but is also a numbers game; The *Law of Large Numbers* applies. The more cultural *products* that are emerging from a system (e.g., film, television, multiplatform / transmedia, etc) at any one time, the more creative (i.e., 'new and useful', and thus successful - and thus: **sustainable**) products also emerge. **Policy advice:** Stimulating the production of *more units* (but with each unit, at a lower cost). **Suggest:** Reinstating a scheme/s such as the 10B(A) tax incentives from the 1980s, in order to stimulate more film, television and multiplatform productions.
- In the Systems Model of Creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2015),<sup>1</sup> the success of any industry is an aggregate of the successes of the *individuals* within that cultural field (film, television, multiplatform, etc). The film industry is a system; Systems Science tells us any system's outputs depend on its inputs. A PhD comparative-study of *highest-RoI versus lowest-RoI films* (2016) reveals individual guidelines for **multiple** necessary **factors** for would-be successful film creatives. In the age of Big Data, solutions are about working smarter, not harder – mainly by using better Background Theory to inform Industry Practice. (see: PhD study, Velikovsky, 2016a).
- In short, this Submission recommends increasing private investment in the film and TV industries via *tax incentives* (such as the 1980s 10B(A) scheme), and *policy at government screen funding bodies* whereby many more projects (film, television, multiplatform, transmedia) are funded - each for much lower budgets - in order to maximize creativity, and thus **growth** and **sustainability**. As an example: our nation can (a) make one movie like *Australia* (2008) for \$130M - or – (b) via *portfolio theory*, we could instead choose to make 130 movies, for \$1M each... Choice (b) has the better *predicted overall outcome*.

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<sup>1</sup> See also: *The Creative System in Action* (P. McIntyre, Fulton, & Paton, 2016).

## FEATURE FILMS (MOVIES)

The primary research focus of this section is on feature-length films (i.e., movies).

The recent book *Pop Culture in Asia and Oceania* (Murray & Nadeau, 2016), reports that:

‘The 10 most popular Australian-made movies at the Australian theatrical cinema box office are *Crocodile Dundee* (1986), *Australia* (2008), *Babe* (1995), *Happy Feet* (2006), *Moulin Rouge!* (2001), *The Great Gatsby* (2013), *Crocodile Dundee II* (1988), *Strictly Ballroom* (1992), *Red Dog* (2011), and *The Dish* (2000).’ (Velikovsky, 2016c, p. 175)

It should be noted: *not all popular movies are great; and not all great movies are popular.*<sup>2</sup>

As a creative nation, Australia has produced low-budget movie masterpieces such as *Wake in Fright* (1971), *Bad Boy Bubby* (1994), *Chopper* (2000) and *The Castle* (1997) to name a few.

### ToR 1 (Factors) – [re: Film Industry]

Regarding the *factors* contributing to the growth and sustainability of the Australian *film industry*, the question can be reduced to: ‘**What factors ultimately cause individual films to succeed, or, to fail?**’ (where *success* means financial break-even or better, i.e. a film returning a profit). Regarding causal *factors* for movie success, the PhD thesis (Velikovsky 2016, online) states:

‘Overall these findings also point to the *Anna Karenina* principle (Diamond, 1997; Simonton, 2011) whereby: success means not only achieving success in all key components [*the movie’s: screen idea, story, screenplay, financing, cast, crew, production (shooting, editing, effects, music, sound design), marketing, and distribution*] but also avoiding singular possible causes of failure - or more simply that **movie success is multifactorial** while **failure can be monofactorial.**’ (Velikovsky, 2016a, p. 323, bold emphasis mine)

That Ph.D research study dissertation (Velikovsky, 2016a, online)<sup>3</sup> presents solutions to certain key real-world problems in the domain of feature films, namely difficulties of *career sustainability* for individual movie industry creatives (i.e., movie screenwriters, directors, producers, cast and crew).

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<sup>2</sup> (Personal opinion)

<sup>3</sup> Velikovsky (2016) PhD thesis, online at: <https://storyality.wordpress.com/my-phd-dissertation-free-online/>

Two universal facts which are also *factors* that *hinder* the growth and sustainability of any nation's film industry include the *feature film* (movie) *domain problems* of:

**Problem #1: On average, 70% of movies lose money** (De Vany, 2004, p. 12; Velikovsky, 2016a, p. 8; Vogel, 1990, p. 70; 2014, p. 83).

This question becomes: *What exactly are the successful 30% of movies, doing right? (And also, simultaneously, what are they not doing wrong?)*

**Problem #2: 98% of screenplays presented to producers go unmade** (Field, [1979] 2005, p. 8; Macdonald, 2003, p. 31; 2004, p. 190; 2013, p. 67; Price, 2010, pp. 132-133; Stoddard, 1911, p. 1) (Velikovsky, 2016a, p. 9)

This question becomes: *What exactly are the selected 2% of movie screenplays, doing right? (And also, simultaneously, what are they not doing wrong?)*

Velikovsky's (2016) PhD study aims to address the above two key *domain problems* in film. In order to **grow** and to be **sustainable**, the Australian film industry as a whole (and individual filmmakers) must solve these two problems. For example, most directors only make one film in their career. Again citing the PhD dissertation (Velikovsky, 2016a, online):

'*Screen Australia* (2012) research on the Australian movie industry reveals the same *problem-situation* for [Australian] movie creatives, as **movie directors are likely to only direct one movie in their career** (see: Groves, 2012, online); often the key problem is that the movie story in question fails to reach a sufficiently wide audience in cinemas to break even, consequently ending that movie career.' (Velikovsky, 2016a, p. 10, online, bold emphasis mine)

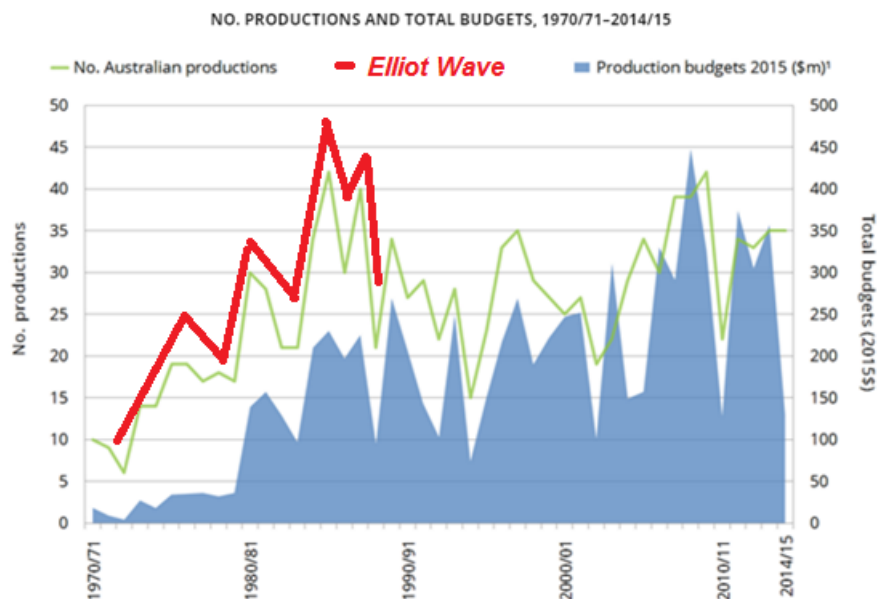
To these problems - for the purpose of the current *Inquiry* - we can add:

**Problem #3: Australia produces around 50 films a year**, while the international total 'pool of films' with which these 50 films must compete for audience attention is around **8,000 films**.<sup>4</sup> Citing the PhD dissertation (Velikovsky, 2016a, online):<sup>5</sup>

'Approximately 600 to 800 new movies are released in US cinemas every year (MPAA, 2011, p. 16; 2012, p. 20; Vogel, 2011, p. 123). Analysis provided by the *UNESCO Institute for Statistics* (2014) indicate that India produces the highest number of new movies with 1,255 movies per annum while by comparison Australia typically creates around 40-50 theatrical cinema movies per year (UNESCO/Chartsbin, 2015, online).' (Velikovsky, 2016a, p. 114)

## ToR 2 (Growth) [re: Film Industry]

*Screen Australia* research shows the following trend in Australian feature film production:



**Figure 1 - NUMBER PRODUCED, TOTAL PRODUCTION BUDGETS AND AVERAGE BUDGET PER FILM (CURRENT\* AND 2015 DOLLARS), 1970/71–2014/15 (Screen Australia, 2015)<sup>6</sup>**  
**with Elliot Wave added, in red (by Velikovsky 2017)**

<sup>4</sup> Or approximately 7,989 feature films produced internationally, see: <http://chartsbin.com/view/29777>

<sup>5</sup> Velikovsky (2016) PhD thesis, online at: <https://storyality.wordpress.com/my-phd-dissertation-free-online/>

<sup>6</sup> See: <http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/fact-finders/production-trends/feature-production/australian-feature-films> (accessed 22nd Feb 2017)

*Figure 1* above clearly shows the 'boost' in film production in the 1980s during the 10B(A) tax incentive scheme. A relative 'bust' follows, when the 10B(A) scheme was discontinued. The Elliot Wave<sup>7</sup> (see the *red trendline*, above) shows the 'boost-and-bust' cycle in the 10B(A) decade of the 1980s.

### **ToR 3 (Sustainability) [re: Film Industry]**

Economic sustainability means: profitability. But the problems that filmmakers must solve include that: *98% of screenplays go unmade, and 70% of movies lose money.*<sup>8</sup>

One potential solution is: Policy that results in **making *more* movies, (and for lower average budgets) thus increasing the overall number of productions, and also thus the number of successful films.** Notably, in the 10 B(A) tax era (1980-1988):

'The average number of feature films made per year [in Australia] doubled from 15 in the 1970s to 27 in the 1980s when some 65 mini-series were also made. Additionally the budgets for all these rose sharply. The incentives exempted film production from the full pressures of the market.' (O'Regan & Moran, 1989, p. 118)

Film (and also, Television) markets are 'evolutionary survival tournaments' (De Vany, 2004, pp. 14,18). Australian movies – in general - cannot compete *directly* with US/Hollywood cinema on the level of film budgets (and thus, onscreen production values and special effects), so they are forced compete on different levels: namely, ***story creativity***, and ***filmmaking creativity***.<sup>9</sup> (Movies judged 'creative' by the global audience are those movies that are successful - they reach a wide enough global audience to achieve break-even, or, to go into profit.) The PhD thesis (Velikovsky 2016, online) examines the Top 20 RoI (Return-on-Investment) movies, and uses a multifactorial comparison of these, to the Bottom 20 RoI movies. Note that the Australian film *Mad Max* (1980) is in second place (internationally), and resulted in three sequels:

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<sup>7</sup> See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elliott\\_wave\\_principle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elliott_wave_principle)

<sup>8</sup> See: <https://storyality.wordpress.com/my-phd-dissertation-free-online/>

<sup>9</sup> See: (Velikovsky, 2016a).

<b>StoryAlity</b>		<b>TOP 20 R.O.I. FILMS</b>		
#	MOVIE	BUDGET	WORLDWIDE GROSS	% ROI
1	Paranormal Activity	\$15,000	\$196,681,656	1,311,211 %
2	Mad Max	\$200,000	\$99,750,000	49,875 %
3	The Blair Witch Project	\$600,000	\$248,300,000	41,383 %
4	El Mariachi	\$7,000	\$2,041,928	29,170 %
5	Night of the Living Dead	\$114,000	\$30,000,000	26,316 %
6	Rocky	\$1,000,000	\$225,000,000	22,500 %
7	Halloween	\$325,000	\$70,000,000	21,538 %
8	American Graffiti	\$777,000	\$140,000,000	18,018 %
9	Clerks	\$27,000	\$3,894,240	14,423 %
10	Once	\$150,000	\$18,997,174	12,665 %
11	Napoleon Dynamite	\$400,000	\$46,140,956	11,535 %
12	Open Water	\$500,000	\$55,116,982	11,023 %
13	Friday the 13 <sup>th</sup>	\$550,000	\$59,754,601	10,864 %
14	Saw	\$1,200,000	\$103,096,345	8,591 %
15	Primer	\$7,000	\$565,846	8,084 %
16	The Evil Dead	\$375,000	\$29,400,000	7,840 %
17	ET: The Extra-Terrestrial	\$10,500,000	\$792,910,554	7,552 %
18	The Full Monty	\$3,500,000	\$256,900,000	7,340 %
19	Star Wars	\$11,000,000	\$797,900,000	7,254 %
20	My Big Fat Greek Wedding	\$5,000,000	\$353,900,000	7,078 %

[www.the-numbers.com/movies/records/budgets.php](http://www.the-numbers.com/movies/records/budgets.php)

**Data set compiled 2012 - JT Velikovsky**  
<http://storyality.wordpress.com>

*Table 1 - The Top 20 RoI Movies: Budget, Box Office Gross, RoI(%) (Source: <https://storyality.wordpress.com/2012/11/23/storyality-3b-Trailers-of-the-Top-20-RoI-Movies/> Velikovsky 2012-2016, accessed 27th March 2017)*

Another view of the same dataset is as follows:

ROI #	MOVIE	YEAR	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	PRODUCTION BUDGET	ESTIMATED GLOBAL AUDIENCE REACH
1	Paranormal Activity	2009	USA	\$15,000	26,224,221
2	Mad Max	1980	Australia	\$200,000	37,081,784
3	The Blair Witch Project	1999	USA	\$600,000	48,877,953
4	<i>El Mariachi</i>	1992	Mexico	\$7,000	492,031
5	Night of the Living Dead	1968	USA	\$114,000	22,900,763
6	<b>Rocky</b>	1976	<b>USA</b>	\$1,000,000	105,633,803
7	<b>Halloween</b>	1978	<b>USA</b>	\$325,000	29,914,530
8	<b>American Graffiti</b>	1973	<b>USA</b>	\$777,000	79,096,045
9	Clerks	1994	USA	\$27,000	931,636
10	Once	2006	Ireland	\$150,000	2,900,332
11	Napoleon Dynamite	2004	USA	\$400,000	7,430,106
12	Open Water	2003	USA	\$500,000	9,140,461
13	<b>Friday the 13<sup>th</sup></b>	1980	<b>USA</b>	\$550,000	22,213,606
14	<b>SAW</b>	2004	<b>USA</b>	\$1,200,000	16,601,666
15	Primer	2004	USA	\$7,000	91,119
16	The Evil Dead	1981	USA	\$375,000	10,575,540
17	<b>E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial</b>	1982	<b>USA</b>	\$10,500,000	269,697,467
18	The Full Monty	1997	UK	\$3,500,000	55,969,499
19	<b>Star Wars</b>	1977	<b>USA</b>	\$11,000,000	357,802,691
20	<b>My Big Fat Greek Wedding</b>	2002	<b>USA</b>	\$5,000,000	60,912,220

*Table 2 - The Top 20 RoI Movies: Year / Country of Origin & Production / Production Budget / Estimated Audience-Reach (in: Number of persons in a cinema) (Velikovskiy, 2016a, p. 18)*

In Table 2 - *Top 20 RoI (Return on Investment) Movies* (above), *Mad Max*, and also *SAW* involve Australians as key filmmaking creatives (the 'Hollywood' movies are in **bold**).<sup>10</sup>

Regarding the current Inquiry's media statement of Feb 9<sup>th</sup> 2017:

`Committee Chair, Mr Luke Howarth MP said: "the committee wants to hear how Australian independent filmmakers, and major film and TV companies can **expand and better compete for investment** with producers and multi-platform production companies from overseas... As a committee, we believe Australian film and TV can be **more competitive**, and we will be investigating ways the Australian industry can **grow sustainably**." (Howarth MP, 2017, online, bold emphasis mine)

It is salient to note that:

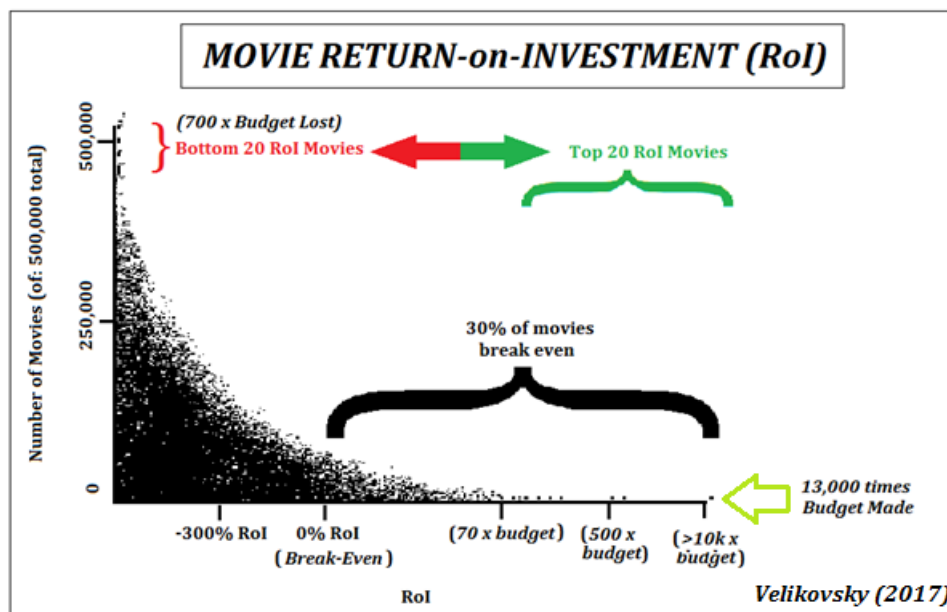
`...the top 20 RoI movies as a dataset are dominated by movies originating from the USA (16/20 movies) although only *eight* of that sixteen are considered to be 'classical Hollywood movies'; the remaining eight movies (of the 16/20) from the USA were **independently written, financed and**

<sup>10</sup> See also the excellent research on Australian cinema box office at: <http://thescreenblog.com/screenintel/performance-in-australian-cinemas/>



**produced movies** which achieved a cinema release.’ (Velikovsky, 2016a, p. 18)

In short: In terms of ‘*benefit/cost ratio*’, there are 8 independent movies in the lists above that out-competed *Star Wars* (1978). Studying the creative methods, processes, techniques - and common story elements common to these top 20 RoI movies - is revealing for movie creatives (writers, directors, producers, casts and crews). (See: Velikovsky 2016, online, for details).



*Figure 2 – The Study Method: Comparing the Top 20 RoI Movies with the Bottom 20 RoI Movies (Velikovsky 2016a, online)*

**The Key Findings, Implications and Conclusions of (Velikovsky 2016) - re: Policy**

The *Findings* of the PhD study (Velikovsky, 2016a) apply specifically to addressing problems of *career sustainability* for individual film screenwriters, directors, producers, cast and crew. Taken as an aggregate whole, the *Findings* of that Ph.D also apply to film industry growth and sustainability.

These Ph.D study Findings would suggest the following implications for government policy:

1. Movie investors are risk-averse. However - **movies that are conceived, designed and executed (i.e., written, produced, marketed and released) specifically using high-ROI factors are more likely to attract investment than those which are not.** Velikovsky (2016a, online) identifies 30 such key factors, via comparative study of the *top 20 highest Return-on-Investment movies*, versus the *bottom 20 (i.e. lowest) Return-on-Investment movies*. For specifics, see, for example: '*Chapter 7.3.1 - Characteristics of an archetypal Top 20 RoI Movie*' (Velikovsky, 2016a, pp. 307-312, online)
2. Incentivising film investment, and thus an overall increase in the *quantity* of movies produced would result in (numerically) more *quality* (i.e., more creative, i.e., successful) films being produced.<sup>11</sup> Noting the existing 40% Producer Offset, **reinstating the 10B(A) tax scheme of the 1980s (or a similar model)<sup>12</sup> would increase the number of feature films produced annually.** This means more jobs, and more Australian stories onscreen.
3. **More creative (i.e., Lower-Film-Budget / Higher-Return-on-Investment) movies<sup>13</sup> are required in order to out-compete Hollywood and international movies,** and likewise also, *avoiding* key '*Loss-on-Investment*' principles and characteristics of movies.<sup>14</sup> The PhD study (Velikovsky, 2016a, online) uses a new study method in comparing the (successful) screenwriting and filmmaking

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<sup>11</sup> '...the 10B(A) scheme of the 1980s in Australia is salient (Stratton, 1990) and resulted in many more movies being made per annum in Australia, which overall also resulted in (numerically) more creative movies.' (Velikovsky, 2016a, p. 163).

<sup>12</sup> See:

[https://www.academia.edu/369697/Boom\\_and\\_Bust\\_In\\_Australian\\_Screen\\_Policy\\_10BA\\_the\\_Film\\_Finance\\_Corporation\\_and\\_Hollywoods\\_Race\\_to\\_the\\_Bottom](https://www.academia.edu/369697/Boom_and_Bust_In_Australian_Screen_Policy_10BA_the_Film_Finance_Corporation_and_Hollywoods_Race_to_the_Bottom)

<sup>13</sup> (namely: high benefit/cost ratios). See: (Velikovsky, 2016a).

<sup>14</sup> See: (Velikovsky, 2016a, p. 323, online) for some key conclusions of the PhD research study.

- practices and characteristics of *the top 20 RoI movies* to the (unsuccessful) *bottom 20 RoI movies*.<sup>15</sup>
4. Notably also, the 10B(A) period resulted in quality (i.e., creative, successful) movies such as *Gallipoli* (1981), *The Man from Snowy River* (1982), *Mad Max 2* (1982), and *Crocodile Dundee* (1986). Extremely-high-RoI movies, such as *Crocodile Dundee* (the 23<sup>rd</sup> highest RoI movie, internationally) have lower budgets (e.g., \$5M), but have a higher *relative-audience-reach* (or, RoI) in cinemas and ancillary media (on DVD, BluRay, cable, airlines, etc).
  5. The average top-20-RoI movie *budget* (such as *Mad Max*) is under USD\$2M, and some (the movies *Primer*, and *El Mariachi*) are as low as USD\$7,000 (Velikovskyy, 2016a). In a highly-competitive commercial environment where *70% of movies lose money*, and *98% of movie screenplays go unmade*, **policy that incentivises more investment in more creative (‘low-budget / high-RoI’) movie productions would potentially result in a more sustainable business model for the Australian film industry.**
  6. The movie *Australia* (2008) was widely criticized (despite a talented cast and crew).<sup>16</sup> The budget was \$130M. However *one hundred and thirty* \$1M budget Australian movies could be produced, for the same figure. If only 2% of those movies were creative (as is ‘the rule of thumb’ in *Evolution*, and in *Creativity*), then at least two of those movies would be extremely successful in terms of RoI, and 39 of those movies would break even, or better. Crucially, with a great number of productions overall, there would also be a lot more diversity and inclusion of the many different Australian voices and stories on the big screen.

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<sup>15</sup> Two of the all-time top 20 RoI movies involved Australian key creatives (*Mad Max* and *SAW*).

<sup>16</sup> The movie *Australia* (2008) scored 53% on *Metacritic*; see: <http://www.metacritic.com/movie/australia>

## CONCLUSION

In short, the key **Factors** contributing to the **growth** and **sustainability** of the Australian film industry are: more *creativity and innovation*, in order to attract investment. A simple mathematical truth is that: the more movies that are made overall, the more opportunities for more filmmakers, and also the more likely that *creative* (successful) movies will emerge from that film system. The 2016 PhD thesis 'Communication, Creativity and Consilience in Cinema' is a study of such **factors**, namely the creative (film) *person*, their creative *process* (their filmmaking processes), and the creative *product* (the movie).

## TELEVISION

The primary research focus of this section is on *television*.

An examination of the single highest-rating television programs in Australia from 2001-2016 is dominated by sports grand finals (AFL, Rugby, Wimbledon) and reality-TV programs (cooking, singing, or house-renovation competitions).<sup>17</sup> However, as with movies, popular TV is not always great; and great TV is not always popular. To date some of the best-quality Australian TV series have included: *The Secret Life of Us* (2001-2006), *Kath and Kim* (2002-2007), *Countdown* (1974-1987), *The Movie Show/At The Movies* (1986-2014), *Frontline* (1994-1997), *The Dream - with Roy and HG* (2000-2004), *The Chaser's War On Everything* (2006-2009), *Q&A* (2008-present), *Underbelly* (2008-2013), and the telemovie about future water-scarcity and climate-change, *Scorched* (2008).<sup>18</sup>

### ToRs (factors, growth, sustainability)

Regarding the *factors* contributing to the *growth* and *sustainability* of the Australian *television industry*, the question can be reduced to:

#### **What factors ultimately cause *individual television series* to succeed, or, to fail?**

(where *success* means a television program rating well enough, not to get cancelled – which ensures advertising revenues for commercial television, or audience satisfaction for ABC-TV and SBS). Like success in movies (i.e., the *Anna Karenina* principle, success is multifactorial, and also involves *avoiding monofactorial causes of failure*).

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<sup>17</sup> See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Television\\_ratings\\_in\\_Australia#Top-rated\\_programs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Television_ratings_in_Australia#Top-rated_programs) (accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2017)

<sup>18</sup> This sentence might be regarded as 'personal opinion', but is also shared by a consensus of TV critics.

**Obstacles to *growth and sustainability*:** In a changing competitive television media environment (another 'evolutionary survival tournament' in culture) 'the bar of quality' has been raised so high by such dominant, high-budget US (cable) TV series such as *LOST*, *Deadwood*, *Dexter*, *Breaking Bad*, *Game of Thrones*, *The Walking Dead* and *Stranger Things*. The only comparable Australian TV series has been Aboriginal science-fiction-thriller *Cleverman* (2016-present). This leads to considerations of Genre in television.

**The importance of Genre:** It should be noted, these successful (thus: sustainable) American *HBO*, *ShowTime*, and *Netflix* TV series are **Genre** television (i.e., they are not: 'Drama'). Just as the 'Drama' genre dominates the *bottom 20 RoI movies*, while conversely *Genre* films (e.g., horror, science-fiction, comedies, sports, musicals, gangster – i.e. non-Dramas) dominate the top 20 RoI movies,<sup>19</sup> it would appear - given how creativity works (i.e., expressed most simply, *combine two old things, to get a new thing*)<sup>20</sup> - Australian TV content creators constantly look to combine old successful TV series concepts, in a new and effective way. But we may ask: Where, for example, is: the original, Australian Television versions of, say, *Twin Peaks* (e.g., a surrealist detective-mystery series, set in the Australian outback)? Or, the Australian equivalents of say: *Dr Who*, *Star Trek*, *Dexter*, *LOST*, *Stranger Things*, *Westworld*, and so forth? Television screenwriters do create such concepts, but risk-averse TV producers avoid risk and feel they cannot currently afford to take the gamble.

Creativity (creative risk-taking) and innovation is again key, in order to avoid just more Reality-TV. Not that there is necessarily anything wrong with more reality-TV.<sup>21</sup> Australian Reality-TV could well combine 'tried-and-true' reality-TV formulas from other markets with interesting Australian contexts; ABC-TV's *Surfing The Menu* for example creatively combines 'cooking + surfing'. The creative answer is: Combine a list of random topics with

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<sup>19</sup> See: (Velikovsky, 2016a, pp. 250, 254, 276, 287, 311, 316, 323, 362, 376-377, 411, 415, 429)

<sup>20</sup> See Martindale (1989) cited in (Velikovsky, 2016a, p. 38, Footnote 64).

<sup>21</sup> (if you like that kind of thing; so-called 'Reality-TV' appears to be popular with many Millennials).

`Cooking (e.g.: Cooking + (say) Sheep-Shearing; or Cooking + Hunting, or Cooking + [etc]); and likewise combine a list of random topics with Renovation (Renovation + Australia's Craziest Car Chases, etc) until a `winning combination' is discovered, by random chance. The ultimate litmus test is the audience, but unless these shows are put into the market: nobody knows.<sup>22</sup>The internet (*YouTube* channels) has also clearly made the battle for the screentime-attention of audiences even more competitive.

A potential **policy** solution is: to create *more* TV series (again, for: lower budgets), and some of them will prove successful. Yet another option well known to TV producers is to scour popular *YouTube* channels (such as say: *Ozzy Man Reviews*)<sup>23</sup> for potential TV series spinoffs. But again the policy suggestion is: stimulating more *quantity*, results in more individual *quality* shows emerging.

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<sup>22</sup> This is the BVSR (i.e. Blind Variation and Selective Retention), evolutionary model of creativity, combined with the evolutionary Systems Model of Creativity; see (Velikovsky, 2016a, p. 55).

<sup>23</sup> See: <https://www.youtube.com/user/ozzymanreviews>

## TRANSMEDIA (MULTI-PLATFORM)

The primary research focus of this section is on *transmedia* (or, *multi-platform production*).

Again with specific reference to the current Inquiry's media statement of Feb 9<sup>th</sup> 2017:

Committee Chair, Mr Luke Howarth MP said: "the committee wants to hear how Australian independent filmmakers, and major film and TV companies can **expand and better compete** for investment **with** producers and **multi-platform production companies from overseas**." (Howarth MP, 2017, online, bold emphasis mine)

The recent *Pop Culture in Asia and Oceania* (Murray & Nadeau, 2016), reports that:

**Transmedia storytelling**, also known as **multiplatform** or **cross-media storytelling**, refers to the creation of a unified story experience across more than one media, including television series, Internet webisodes, fictional online character blogs, social media (Facebook, Twitter), mobile apps, and also movies, novels, and games, including online participatory fan culture. **Adaptations** to another media, or sequels within the same media, are not considered transmedia storytelling but are instead considered franchising, a phenomenon that dates back to Homer, Shakespeare, the Bible, and even *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (ca. 2100 BCE). Examples of popular transmedia in Australia include *Fat Cow Motel* (2003–); *Summer Bay Interactive*, (2008) based on the long-running popular Australian television soap opera *Home and Away* (1988–); and also *Find 815* (2007–2008), an online alternate-reality game that extended the narrative of the popular American television series *Lost* (2004–2010).<sup>24</sup> (Velikovsky, 2016d, p. 254)

In terms of extant research on transmedia: the 2009 PhD thesis *Transmedia Practice: Theorising The Practice Of Expressing A Fictional World Across Distinct Media And Environments* (Dena, 2009) explicates Transmedia practice, as does the international Transmedia conference proceedings *Transmedia Practice: A Collective Approach* (Polson, Cook, Brackin, & Velikovsky, 2014).<sup>24</sup> For non-fiction transmedia, see also (Kerrigan & Velikovsky, 2015).

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<sup>24</sup> See: <https://storyality.wordpress.com/2013/11/18/storyality-96-transmedia-practice-a-collective-approach-2014/>



The workings of Transmedia - whereby 'narrative extensions' spread into other media - are explained by evolutionary creativity theory in culture.<sup>25</sup> However the key question becomes: *Why create a multiplatform narrative; Why not create a single- platform narrative first, and see whether it 'works' with an audience, or not?* One (automatic) response is: 'Because everyone else is doing it, we should too.' However - importantly - the *audience demand* for Transmedia is a **factor** of demand for a *specific narrative world*, itself. Audiences want more of a specific narrative, on additional media, *if* they like the story, characters and storyworld, in the first instance. Both some of the top 20 RoI and also some of the bottom 20 RoI movies had 'transmedia narrative extensions'; yet just as there was limited demand for the (problematic) Bottom 20 RoI movies, so too there was limited demand for even *more* of those same stories in other media (on other media platforms).<sup>26</sup> Demand existed for Transmedia extensions of *Star Wars, Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings, Twin Peaks, Dexter, Lost, The Matrix, The Blair Witch Project* (and others) - because the *initial story* - presented in one media - was: creative (i.e., was 'new, and it worked').

**Implications for Policy:** Projects that warrant Transmedia (i.e., cross-media, or, multiplatform) narrative extensions are those that first 'prove themselves' in the marketplace in one media, and demand then exists for *more of that storyworld*, in other (trans)media. However, not *all* narratives need - *by default* - to be told across more than one media. An unpopular narrative in one media need (and arguably, should) not, spread to others.

Crucial factors in the **growth** and **sustainability** of screen industries (film, television, and multiplatform/transmedia) are that: *useful guidelines* are learned from the highest-RoI

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<sup>25</sup> See: (Velikovsky, 2016b), book chapter available free online at: <https://storyality.wordpress.com/2016/04/06/storyality132-the-holon-parton-structure-of-the-meme-the-unit-of-culture/>

<sup>26</sup> See: (Velikovsky, 2016a, p. 435).

products, and cautionary lessons also learned from the lowest-RoI products, in any communication medium.

## CONCLUSIONS OF THE SUBMISSION

In this, 'The Age of the Algorithm', screen industry **growth and sustainability** is about Big Data, not about individual opinions vulnerable to human cognitive bias. The solutions lie in statistics, probability, and evolutionary theories of media competition - rather than the old-school 'Two Cultures' view of Science *versus* the Arts, and solutions are to be found in Consilience (i.e., Science *meets* the Arts).<sup>27</sup> Understanding is growing that Evolutionary Theory also applies to Culture, and not merely to Biology alone.<sup>28</sup>

As a metaphor: If we want a *garden* to experience **growth**, and to be **sustainable**, we use the ecological Science of Biology. So too in Culture, with the creative screen industries of **film**, **television** and **transmedia** (aka 'multiplatform'), planting and nurturing as many 'seeds' as possible, sustains the growth of a cultural 'garden'. This means incentivising more films, more television series, and more transmedia – and it becomes more likely that the creative ones will propagate. The successful creators can then train the new generation of screen media communicators, and comparative research on 'successful' versus 'unsuccessful' media can iteratively inform Theory and Practice, in a Systems cycle.

A quote from McIntyre's (2012), *Creativity and Cultural Production: Issues for Media Practice*:

'Creativity is not what most people think it is.' (Phillip McIntyre, 2012, p. 3)

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<sup>27</sup> See: (Wilson, 1998).

<sup>28</sup> See for example: <https://evolution-institute.org/project/society-for-the-study-of-cultural-evolution/>

***Re: Educational Policy and Creativity***

Historian and futurist Yuval Harari notes that *creativity* is a crucial concept to equip today's generation for the uncertain digital future of tomorrow.<sup>29</sup>

Taking this broader and longer view, in terms of ***Educational Policy*** that would assist with screen media practitioners better understanding creativity, the article '*The Standard Definition of Creativity*' (Runco & Jaeger, 2012) and especially the chapter '*New Conceptions and Research Approaches to Creativity: Implications of a Systems Perspective for Creativity in Education*' (Csikszentmihalyi & Wolfe, [2000] 2014) are herein highly recommended reading.<sup>30</sup> If this knowledge about *creativity* was widely taught in primary schools, high schools, and at tertiary level (including in Film Schools) then individual creatives would be better equipped for solving the creative problems that confront them in their career, such as: *How to create a successful: movie, TV show, or multiplatform production.*

It should be noted that *Screen Australia* and the various state government screen production funding bodies have done - and are doing - an excellent job in fostering a creative culture in Australian screen industries, and they are only to be applauded for their work.<sup>31</sup>

In short, this submission suggests that the key ***factors*** that would stimulate the ***growth and sustainability*** of the film, television and multiplatform creative industries (namely, supporting their interconnected: economic, psychological, social, and cultural systems) would

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<sup>29</sup> See: <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bigideas/brief-history-of-tomorrow/8236782>

<sup>30</sup> An additional synthesis of the Systems Model of Creativity is online at:

<https://storyality.wordpress.com/creative-practice-theory/>

<sup>31</sup> So too with the *Australia Council for the Arts*.

include: making *more products* (more films, more TV series, more multiplatform) for *lower per-unit cost*, and leveraging *creativity*.

This would also encourage more opportunity, diversity, and inclusion, and the overall increased unit production would also create more jobs in those industries.

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