

Film Inquiry Submission No. 21

OPPORTUNITIES FOR AUSTRALIAN FILM, ANIMATION, SPECIAL EFFECTS AND ELECTRONIC GAMES INDUSTRY

A Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee
on
Communications, Information Technology and the Arts.

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Terms of Reference

This submission addresses in passing, all the terms of reference but concentrates upon

- (e) The skills required to facilitate future growth in these industries and the capacity of the education and training system to meet these demands.
- (f) The effectiveness of the existing linkages between these industries and the wider cultural and information technology sectors.
- (g) How Australia's capabilities in these industries, including in education and training, can be best leveraged to maximise export and investment opportunities.

1. Background to Bond University Submission

- 1.1 The subject of this enquiry is the convergence of various established industries (film, television, special effects, animation and electronic games) in the context of blurring of traditional boundaries and the catalytic effect of digitisation.
- 1.2 Bond University's stake in this process of convergence is based upon the quality of the existing educational programs of its School of Information Technology and its Centre for Film, Television and Screen-based Media;
- 1.3 Bond has a substantial technological base in digital technologies and a commitment to expand its interest in convergent technology.
- 1.4 Bond is located close to established centres of the film and television production industry and of the digital electronic games industry.
- 1.5 Bond's compact size and its flexible academic and administrative structures enable rapid response to industry change and evolving needs.
- 1.6 Bond's attractive physical location in one of the fastest growing regions of Australia makes it a suitable site for development of these industries.

2. Bond University Contribution

Bond University can contribute to opportunities in film (including television), animation, special effects and electronic games industries through both the Centre for Film, Television and Screen-based Media and its School of Information Technology.

2.1 Bond University's Role in Film and Television

- 2.1.1 Bond University offers a comprehensive program with a strong production emphasis. The orientation of the program is professional/industrial. Instruction in the program relies heavily upon industry professionals working under the supervision of academic staff, while an Advisory Committee of senior industry professionals provides oversight of the course content and ensures its tolerance to industry needs.
- 2.1.2 Bond has pioneered tertiary internships for academic credit in the film and television industry in Queensland. These internships are currently based upon goodwill between the university and the participating production houses and companies. In addition, through its commercial production entity, Bond Media Production, in-house internships offer real-life experiences to advanced level students. Bond Media Production makes a substantial contribution to export earnings through production

of exported educational programs (in excess of \$1m in value to the university).

- 2.1.3 Through its academic and industry staff, Bond can offer re-skilling and upgrading programs for industry professionals, and modular non-degree programs for persons seeking employment skills.
- 2.1.4 The existing FTV degree program offers production-based subjects in TV Studio Production, Scriptwriting, Video Project Development and various levels of Video Production as well as specialisations in Corporate Video Production, Documentary Production, Music Video Production and Television Commercial Production. Courses are also available in film financing and distribution and interactive media.
- 2.1.5 The potential exists for student involvement with industry professionals to produce full-length marketable television productions such as serials, self-contained series and telefilms. Such full-length productions would offer a unique educational opportunity to graduates. Bond is well positioned to develop screen-based content in a variety of genres and formats.
- 2.1.6 The connection with complementary digital technologies allows crossovers to be developed linking film, video and small-screen digital media forms. These opportunities also include potential for development of digital production design.

2.2 Bond University's Potential Role in Mobile/Wireless Games

- 2.2.1 Bond University has the ability to introduce up-to-date cutting edge market-orientated technology to students and has been proven by being one of the first Australian Universities to introduce web technology, JAVA programming and E-Commerce. Mobile/Wireless games is one of the new areas that the School is currently exploring to leverage on the Games and Wireless clusters being set up in this region.
- 2.2.2 The IT School is already a Cisco Academy and have faculty skilled in networking, mobile computing and mobile applications, coupled with the Film and Television faculty skills in analysis, design and production skills, thus making it a natural progression to introduce mobile applications and content especially in the mobile game sector.
- 2.2.3 The opportunity offered by the wireless games sector allows interactive games to be played in a scale that was previously thought to be difficult to achieve. The ubiquity of mobile phones and the increased processing power allows users almost unrestricted access to games and related applications.

- 2.2.4 There is also an opportunity in research and development as well as in teaching the production of video content suitable for mobile devices, such as short-clip documentaries, infomercials, etc. where the demand for such content is expected to increase with the advancement and increasing ubiquity of smart phones and PDA's that can receive video transmissions. The IT skills required would be digital content design, human-computer interface techniques, broadband and narrow band networking/communication issues etc.
- 2.2.5 The Gold Coast is a natural attraction for skilled personnel and students worldwide, and Bond University has the ability to train/retrain many of the skilled personnel and update their skills in the sectors mentioned above.
- 2.2.6 The natural melting pot of students from all walks of life increases the richness in education experience as well as offers unique opportunities of exporting the skills acquired by students to a global market.

3. Support Requirements

The environment for integrating training and education with industry practitioners already exists in the region. What is needed to maximise the opportunities this environment provides are support mechanisms for education, training and development, as well as incentives to encourage partnerships between industry and educational institutions.

3.1 For Film and Television these should include:

- 3.1.1 Incentives for production companies to provide internships.
- 3.1.2 Incentives for the location of on-going television production in the region. This is a key requirement, since television production provides continuity of employment and consequently continuity of training opportunities.
- 3.1.3 Incentives for promoting collaboration between universities and other training providers to rationalise course offerings and maximise returns on infrastructure investment.
- 3.1.4 The establishment of a centre of excellence within the proposed Robina media production precinct. This should incorporate parallel training facilities and production studios.
- 3.1.5 Incentives for assisting the tertiary education sector to spin-off and commercialise research done in this area, for example, in relation to processes for video streaming of programs.

3.1.6 Incentives for Universities and the industry to bring in global experts and industry players as well as attract students to this region.

3.2 For Mobile/Wireless Games these should include:

- 3.2.1 The infrastructure of affordable quality broadband, wireless networks, Tier 1 data centres, etc is required in order to carry out effective research, teaching and production as well as encourage the industry in wireless games.
- 3.2.2 Incentives for assisting the tertiary education sector to spin-off and commercialise research done in this area.
- 3.2.3 Incentives for Universities and the industry to bring in global experts and industry players as well as attract students to this region.
- 3.2.4 Assistance in establishing links to major industry players and game console/mobile phone manufacturers and software houses.
- 3.2.5 Incentives to encourage the establishment of centre on excellence in this region.
- 3.2.6 Incentives for Universities and the industry to bring in global experts and industry players as well as attract students to this region.

4. Conclusion

Bond University through its flexible academic structures and its established programs in film and television production and information technology (multimedia emphasis) has the capability to contribute to an evolving film digital media industry complex on the Gold Coast.

The Federal Government can stimulate this digital media industrial development through support mechanisms to encourage university partnerships and university-industry partnerships in development of digital content.

An incentive scheme to attract additional television production to the Gold Coast region would greatly expand both training and employment opportunities there.