

**QUEENSLAND COLLEGE OF ART, GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY  
SUBMISSION**

to  
THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Standing Committee  
on  
Communications, Information Technology and the Arts

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**INQUIRY  
INTO  
THE FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR AUSTRALIA'S FILM, ANIMATION,  
SPECIAL EFFECTS AND ELECTRONIC GAMES INDUSTRIES**

**Background**

This submission addresses the Information Paper's eight Terms of Reference (April 03), with particular emphasis on those Terms concerned with diversifying film industry training, strengthening film and digital education and industry linkages, and developing export markets for Australian owned intellectual property.

**Authority**

Queensland's Griffith University is a networked, future-focussed university serving over 25,000 students from five campus hubs in Australia's fastest growing urban corridor linking Brisbane to the Gold Coast. Griffith is a pioneering market leader in the development of industry-partnered multi-disciplinary study modes from fields including Environmental Studies, Asian Studies, Law, and International Business. Griffith's cross-disciplinary initiatives have been widely emulated by older institutions nationally. Griffith has specialist capabilities in digital media, broadcast media production and animation, and concert-standard musical training and recording.

**A new cross-disciplinary Film School**

In late 2003 Griffith will publicly announce its development of an innovative cross-disciplinary Film School. It consolidates Queensland's most successful and vocationally productive digital and motion picture training courses into a uniquely industry-responsive structure. Strands include full 2D and 3D animation and effects, film and television production, Conservatorium orchestral scoring, multimedia, digital game development and commercialisation, plus serious media business and law cross-overs. Griffith's investment in diversity will complement the national training effort.

**Submission**

- The opportunities for Australia's film, animation, special effects and electronic games industries are growing exponentially. So too are the training needs. Building complementary diversity into the national training effort will result in federal funding efficiencies and increased Intellectual Property yields benefiting all Australians, at a scale not limited by current non-diversity regimes.
- Complementary diversification of the national training effort through initiatives like the Griffith Film School develops creative teams who will build value enhanced networks here, rather than develop individuals who are forced off-shore.

- The Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts has a key role to play in supporting a one-off wide-screen digital upgrade of the tertiary training sector's motion-picture technology platform. Digitising the training platform is a vital step in ensuring content providers and broadcasters have appropriately skilled employees and fresh content to meet their own wide-screen high-definition and multi-channel obligations under the Minister's 2001 digitisation legislation.
- *Distinctive Voices*. Complementary diversity training initiatives such as the Griffith Film School supported by DOCITA re-platforming will optimise conditions for a chorus of distinctively Australian voices to flourish in a vigorously competitive global media market. Digital re-platforming of trainers like Griffith puts our content providers on a level playing field with already digitised offshore competitors.

#### **Why has broadcast digitisation faltered?**

- An absence of compelling programming coupled with expensive TV receiver replacement costs has led Australians to largely ignore the limited digital services provided by broadcasters since the Government's 2001 metropolitan digitisation deadline. License-earning spectrum is going to waste.
- As wide-screen and High Definition TVs become cheaper, the key obstacle to digital and multi-channel service uptake is breaking the 'content drought'. But production in wide screen and particularly HDTV is expensive. And costs are unlikely to fall as long as networks continue to outsource most non-news content production in costly US and UK bulk-supply deals. Networks have little incentive – or in-house capacity now – to develop innovative local content beyond fulfilling minimum and vital ABA local content rules.

#### **Re-invigorating broadcast digitisation**

- Media-training universities and film schools already have a clear charter to provide innovative media content research and development. They do so cost-effectively. But in a globalised production market, they have an even more accountable role to play as national content laboratories.
- *Direct content R&D funding*. It's time to follow the examples of France, Germany and almost all EU content providing nations, and put real government funding into a wider net of film schools with proven content R&D track records. Griffith already works with the AFC, FFC, SBS and ABC to deliver broadcast documentary and educational programming. Direct content R&D funding from DOCITA will provide undiluted assistance to many creative minds. Innovative content will reinvigorate broadcast digitisation.
- Direct content R&D funding to diversified digital media trainers such as Griffith not only broadens the national talent pool, it will help statutory film investment bodies do their work more successfully by increasing their strike-rates.

## Supporting Evidence

### *Multimedia and Games*

- Griffith University developed the first Bachelor of Multimedia in this country. The degree now offers a major study component in interactive gaming, cited by Lynne Spender as exemplary in her recent major study 'The Business of Games'. A diversified university like Griffith is able to respond to rapid digital market demands for IP and employees more effectively than a stand-alone such as the AFTRS that is hard-wired for the film industry.
- Eighty percent of the Games industry in Australia is concentrated in South East Queensland and Victoria (Creative Industries Cluster Study). The Queensland Games industry employs more than 300 people. (Qld Games Developers Assn. website)
- Krome Studios, Brisbane, makes interactive computer games. Established by a Griffith Animation graduate – Krome develops its own games as well as making games on sub-contract for US publishers. Kromes' most recent success is one of their own products, the 3D adventure game 'Ty the Tasmanian Tiger', achieving world wide sales of 700,000 units for a retail value of \$70 million. Krome is currently working on their second 'Ty' game for an eager and guaranteed market.

### *Animation*

- Animation drives the gaming industry. Griffith University offers Australia's only three year Bachelor of Animation degree, with thirty five enrolments every year achieving a 75-80% employment rate. Students learn all forms of the craft, from traditional hand-drawn animation to the most sophisticated 3D modelling.
- Liquid Animation Pty Ltd, a five year old Brisbane start-up by Griffith animation graduates, now currently employs more than 60 staff, producing 2D and 3D Series animation for high-profile US clients. Key production roles are occupied by Griffith graduates in Layout, Animation, In-betweening and digital ink and paint.
- Lightknights Pty Ltd, Brisbane, recently completed the highly rated 3D animation series 'The Shapiers' for the 9 Network, Sydney. Griffith animation graduates fill key positions at Lightknights – including Storyboard Artists, Animation Manager, and Assistant Director.

### *Pay TV*

- With Foxtel and Optus Vision consolidating in 2002, Pay TV can work – if it can find innovative content at reasonable prices. Pay-TV has immediate demand for the type of efficient and divergent production graduates that the Griffith Film School will provide.

- 22 per cent of Australian households are connected to Pay-TV, more than double the 10 per cent hooked up to broadband internet. Market demand for cost-effective Australian made and owned programming grows exponentially. This growth market is not well served by traditional film funding agencies with long-lead times. Direct DOCITA content R&D funding to tertiary trainers such as Griffith will help provide attractive Australian content alternatives to cheap overseas product flooding new Pay markets.
- Brisbane's 'Fat Cow Motel' explores the cutting edge of new multi-platform content delivery. A TV show with mobile phone and game consumer-interactive narratives, the series is produced for Austar Pay TV, innovatively meeting ABA drama content requirements. South East Queensland is blossoming.

#### *Television industry*

- Australian free-to-air TV is more popular than ever, with shows like 'Water rats' being exported to seventy countries. With current regional tensions, 'television-diplomacy' has never been more important in airing democratic Australian values in a non-threatening and friendly way. Griffith University's vanguard commitment to Asian and International Studies creates the right cross-cultural conditions to adapt Australian entertainment products for increased Asia-Pacific export. With DOCITA support, Griffith can build new and regionally vital markets for our content producers.
- Griffith is a proven university supplier of quality broadcast documentaries to the ABC and SBS, with over nine productions aired in the last seven years. Griffith produces quality IP by drawing on its extensive network of internationally expert faculty staff from a wide range of disciplines.

#### *Film Industry*

- Australians spent over \$2 billion on motion picture entertainment in 2002. Increased government investment in a more diversified portfolio of training and entertainment-IP development like Griffith University's strengthens Australia, culturally and economically.
- A stronger Australian dollar against the US demands we rely more on home-grown IP and less on servicing shrinking US 'runaway' productions.

#### *Griffith University*

- GU has 14% of its Student load spread across 42 Creative Arts programmes. This is the highest proportion of Creative Arts : all students in Australia (DEST website, 2000 figures). GU has the third highest total enrolment of Creative Arts students amongst Australian universities after the University of Melbourne and RMIT, both of which have a very different mix of disciplines. With related programmes like Marketing, Law and Informational Technology all in the mix, Griffith is well placed to maximise the outcomes of education for this converging field.

- Modern diversified providers like Griffith University leverage enormous funding value by responding to today's industry needs through cross-disciplinary training. Thanks to its whole-of-practice approach for the last ten years, over 85% of graduates from Queensland's leading film production program at Griffith's Queensland College of Art have found full time industry employment.

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