

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Hearings February 2016

Communications Portfolio

Australian Film Television and Radio School

Question No: 81

Australian Film Television and Radio School

Hansard Ref: Written, 19/02/2016

Topic: Relations with the film industry

Senator Bilyk, Catryna asked:

1. 1. The AFTRS's record in graduating students who become feature film directors has declined substantially over the past 13 years. What is the reason for this?
2. AFTRS has not graduated an Indigenous student who has directed a feature film since 2001. In what ways has the School changed its approach to supporting indigenous students through to graduation?
3. The AFTRS now graduates up to 250 students a year. Please supply statistics on the number who found
 - (a) permanent full time employment,
 - (b) regular part-time employment,
 - (c) some casual employment and
 - (d) no employment in the film and associated industries over the last five years.
4. If these figures in Q.11 are not available how does AFTRS judge that it is providing services and personnel needed to sustain the film and associated industries?

Answer:

1. Over the past 13 years (2003 – 2015), 58 graduates have directed one or more feature films, directing a total of 94 feature films, or an average of seven per year.

In 2003, graduates directed nine feature films; in 2015, six. Given the average number of films directed each year is seven, it is inaccurate to state that AFTRS' record of graduating students who direct feature films has declined substantially over the past 13 years.

Additionally relevant is that during this time period a large number of AFTRS graduates who have directed feature film have also directed high-end television drama (telemovies or series) including **Jane Campion, Phillip Noyce (U.S productions), Peter Duncan, Chris Noonan, Peter Carstairs, Samantha Lang, Shirley Barrett, Kim Farrant, Catriona McKenzie, Tony Ayres, Shawn Seet, Rachel Perkins, Rowan Woods, David Caesar, Daniel Nettheim, Alister Grierson, Robert Connolly, Kriv Stenders, and Cate Shortland**. Much of this work has been both award-winning, and popular with audiences and consumers. In 2014 Fairfax media compiled a list of the most powerful and influential people in Australian television which included five AFTRS alumni; **Anita Jacoby, Cate Shortland, Peter Andrikidis, Rachel Perkins and Tony**

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Hearings February 2016

Communications Portfolio

Australian Film Television and Radio School

Ayres. There are also a number of graduates who have directed television drama, yet have not directed a feature film.

Examples of graduates who have directed television drama between 2003-2016 include.

Note this list is not comprehensive and is a sample only of television drama credits:

Jane Campion: *Top of the Lake*

Shirley Barrett: *Love My Way Love Child Offspring, Mr & Mrs Murder, House Husbands*

Geoff Bennet: *Love My Way, Packed to the Rafters, Underbelly*

Shawn Seet: *Peter Allen - Not the Boy Next Door,*

Tony Ayres: *The turning, The Slap, Saved*

Robert Connolly: *Underground: Julian Assange Story, The Slap*

Peter Andrikidis: *East West 101, Underbelly, Catching Milat, Bikie Wars Brothers in Arms, The Straits, Killing Time, Rescue Special Ops, Rogue Nation, The Diplomat, Miss Fishers Murder Mysteries*

Rachel Perkins: *Redfern Now, Mabo*

Adrian Russel Wills: *Redfern Now*

Peter Carstairs: *Nowhere Boys, Winners and Losers, Home and Away*

Alister Grierson *Parer's War, Nowhere Boys*

Samantha Lang: *Carlotta, The Killing Field, My Place*

Catherine Millar: *Wentworth Prison, Wonderland, Miss Fishers Murder Mysteries, House Husbands, Home and Away, All Saints, Headland*

David Caesar *Power Games: Nowhere Boys: The Book of Shadows, The Packer-Murdoch Story Underbelly, Miss Fishers Murder Mysteries, Rescue Special Ops, Cops LAC, Rush, Dangerous, RAN: Remote Area Nurse, Fireflies, Crashburn*

Kriv Stenders: *The Principal*

Karl Zwicky: *Underbelly, Home and Away, The Doctor Blake Mysteries, House Husbands, City Homicide*

Cate Shortland: *The Silence, The Slap, Devils Playground, The Secret Life of Us, The Alice*

Peter Templeman: *Wanted, Old School, Lockie Leonard, Bogan Pride, Marx and Venus*

Kim Farrant: *Rush, The Secret Side of Me*

Ben Mathews *Deadbeat Dads*

Katie Hides: *Deadly Women, All Saints*

Richard Jasek: *City Homicide, McLeods Daughters, Home and Away*

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Hearings February 2016

Communications Portfolio

Australian Film Television and Radio School

Catriona McKenzie: *The Gods of Wheat Street, Camp, Redfern Now, My Place, Rescue Special Ops, Dance Academy, Satisfaction, The Circuit, RAN: Remote Area Nurse, The Alice, Fireflies*

Chris Noonan: *The Time of Our Lives, Crownies*

Daniel Nettheim: *Dance Academy*

Peter Duncan: *Rake*

Kay Pavlou: *All Saints, McLeods Daughters*

Scott Picket: *The Moodys, The Elegant Gentlemen's Guide to Knife Fighting, Home and Away*

Rowan Woods: *Hunters, The Kettering Incident, Rake, The Broken Shore, The Straits, Spirited,, Spartacus: War of the Damned, 3 Acts of Murder, Fireflies, Farscape (US)*

Claire McCarthy: *The Turning*

Alumni achieving acclaim in the feature documentary directing space include; **Bob Connolly** (*Mrs Carey's Concert*) and **Sophia Turkiewicz** (*Once My Mother*) and **Rachel Perkins** produced/directed the landmark television documentary series *First Australians*.

While the feature film is recognised as a prestigious work of screen content, over the past 13 years other forms of screen content, such as short form television drama, feature documentary and online digital content, have gained in status and been recognised as equal to, or in some cases more significant than, the feature film. Shifts in screen content creation and the funding landscape are in part due to the structural changes occurring in screen media which has seen a significant increase in the number and types of distribution platforms and audiences on a variety of screens, including television, electronic devices and smartphones, and the internet. The advent of video on demand platforms as well as consumer-produced video platforms has popularised and commercialised alternative platforms to the detriment of cinema distribution, particularly for Australian screen content.

Examples of AFTRS alumni successfully venturing into new terrain include **Robert Connolly** and his multi-cinema event 'release' of *The Turning* and recent directing graduate **Megan Riakos** (2009 & 2010) who fully crowd-funded her award-winning debut feature film *Crushed*, which is being theatrically released in March 2016 via Cinema on Demand across Australia. Recent directing graduates making an impact in the Multiplatform/Webisode arena include: **Ben Mathews** with his websiodes *Bed Heads*, **Kacie Anning** with *Fragments of Friday*, **Erin Good** for *Jade of Death*, **Brian Cobb** with *The Horizon* web series and **Amy Gebhardt**: *Into The Sun* for YouTube's 'Map My Summer'.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Hearings February 2016

Communications Portfolio

Australian Film Television and Radio School

2. AFTRS has a long history of supporting Indigenous students, both through the Award and short course program.

Since 2001, AFTRS has graduated 36 Indigenous students from its Award course programs (figures based on students who identified as Aboriginal or as a Torres Strait Islander on enrolment). While one graduate has directed a feature-length documentary, a number of others have directed television drama.

Between 2001 and 2008, AFTRS supported an Indigenous Program Initiative that ran tailored training projects, administered support programs that provided fee support to Indigenous Australians attending industry short courses, and also merit-based Indigenous scholarships for students attending Award courses.

From 2009 - 2015, AFTRS implemented an Indigenous Program, as part of the School's Open Program. The Indigenous Program focussed on the provision of short courses to Indigenous participants; 982 Indigenous participants engaged in 87 courses. In addition, 413 Indigenous participants who completed an Open Program course received a course fee subsidy through the Indigenous Program.

In January 2016, AFTRS established the Indigenous Unit and appointed an Indigenous industry professional as its Head. The Unit has a focus on the attraction and support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students into Award courses, including the three-year Bachelor of Arts (Screen). Accessibility and support is offered to students through financial scholarships and mentoring partnerships, specifically aimed to assist their progress through to AFTRS graduation.

The Unit will also provide professional development to mid-level Indigenous practitioners. 'Talent Labs' will focus on the further development of high level craft skills through intensive workshops. The 'Industry Pathways Program' will link students through networks into the screen and broadcast industry. Forging strong relationships both with the Indigenous community and the broader screen sector is vital to ensuring successful employment and creative outcomes for the next wave of Indigenous graduates.

3. In 2015, AFTRS graduated 205 students; in 2014, 237 students.

In 2011, the Ipsos Social Research Institute was commissioned to conduct research into AFTRS screen (not radio) graduates. The report contains data based on 1658 graduates; 89 percent reported employment in the industry. It is noted that the industry operates substantially on a freelance basis which was reflected in the data obtained. The answers have been correlated as closely as possible to the questions asked:

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Hearings February 2016

Communications Portfolio

Australian Film Television and Radio School

(a) Permanent full time employment

42% reported that they were currently employed wholly in their chosen field.

(b) Regular part-time employment

20% stated that they were employed part of the time in their chosen field.

18% stated that they were mainly, but not always, working in their chosen field

9% reported that they were not employed at all in their chosen field, but were working in the industry.

(c) Some casual employment and

n/a.

(d) No employment in the film and associated industries over the last five years.

9% indicated not being at all employed in the industry.

4. AFTRS collates information against other measures against which judge the provision of services and personnel needed to sustain the film and associated industries.

International Awards Success: Four alumni have won Academy Awards for a feature film category and five alumni have been nominated for an Academy Award for a feature film category. Three AFTRS student films have been nominated for Academy Awards in the student film category; and one has been nominated for the Student Academy Awards. One alumna has won a BAFTA for a feature film category, and three alumni have received nominations for television and new media categories. One alumnus has won a Primetime Emmy for main title design, and nominated twice for main title design.

International Film Festivals: AFTRS graduates have had their work selected for screening at the world's most prestigious international film festivals, and have also won awards at these festivals. This is an objective measure of global success. This is list of the number of AFTRS graduates that have been winners or competitors at the following international festivals:

- Cannes Film Festival, France: 26 graduates;
- Berlinale, Germany: 23 graduates;
- Sundance Film Festival, USA: 25 graduates;
- Venice International Film Festival, Italy: 10 graduates;
- Toronto International Film Festival: 31 graduates.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Hearings February 2016

Communications Portfolio

Australian Film Television and Radio School

Top International Film School rating: for three separate years (2012, 2014, and 2015), industry journal *The Hollywood Reporter* has ranked AFTRS as one of the world's top international film schools.