

# Australian and Children's Content Review Submission

by Screen Voice

Screen Voice is a group founded in Western Australia made up of experienced independent producers from all genres of film and television production. Its focus is on both regional and federal issues that relate to all aspects of screen production. We welcome the opportunity to provide a submission to the Australian and Children's Content Review.

We strongly support the SPA submission.

In addition we would like to emphasise the importance of diversity of content and of those that make that content for Australian screens.

With cuts to ABC and SBS in particular and due to management decisions, the opportunities for independent producers in the regions have shrunk significantly. The majority of commissioning is comes of out of Sydney and Melbourne for all forms of television.

As a result what is begin created is a more narrow view of Australia and the Australian story. This creative imbalance means the Australian tax-payer, not based in Sydney and Melbourne are not being best served by having their stories and locations reflected on screen.

The production sector in the last few years has been dominated by large, well funded, often foreign owned production companies. Popular with the commercial networks, and increasingly by the public broadcasters, they produce largely reality formats that are mostly Sydney and Melbourne based.

ABC and SBS in particular, have increased their output of foreign owned formats for example *Bully*, *Look Me in the Eye*, *Undressed*, *Filthy Rich* and *Homeless*, *First Dates* to name but a few. ABC ad SBS have no quotas for Australian content and they have no quotas to produce programming made in the regions and have no obligation to independent production. With budgets cut to these public broadcasters independent production and due to management decisions to commission more long form series production in the independent has been hit hard. As a result the diversity of Australian content has suffered.

In 2008 the BBC identified its responsibility to the regions and to independent production. It created a policy that 25% of its budget was to be made with independent companies outside of the M25.

In 2008 the BBC set the following commitments to growing regional production for BBC Network from outside of London:

- 50% of network spend will be made outside London by 2016.

- 17% of network spend will come from the Nations by 2016 and in the interim 12% of spend will

come from the Nations by 2012.

- A proportion of network spend would be made in Scotland, equivalent to Scotland's share of the

UK population, with a comparable approach in relation to Wales and Northern Ireland.

Using [Ofcom's definitions](#), to qualify as a regional production a programme must meet at least two out of the following three criteria:

1. The production company must have a substantive business and production based in the UK outside the M25. A base will be taken to be substantive if it is the usual place of employment of executives managing the regional business, of senior personnel involved in the production in question, and of senior personnel involved in seeking programme commissions;
2. At least 70% of the production budget (excluding the cost of on-screen talent, archive material and copyright costs) must be spent in the UK outside the M25

c. At least 50% of the production talent (ie not on-screen talent) by cost must have their usual place of employment in the UK outside the M25. Freelancers without a usual place of employment outside the M25 will nonetheless count for this purpose if they live outside the M25. Ofcom will consider as part of their 2004 review whether this percentage should rise over time. (1.)

This commitment to the regions and to independent production benefits the entire community, ensuring employment is spread across the nation, that money is spent in the regions and a diverse programming slate is produced that benefits all tax payers.

Our recommendation is that all broadcast networks are required to spend a portion of their budgets with regional based independent companies. The regions should be defined as outside of Sydney and Melbourne.

(1) *2016 BBC Quotas and Targets*

<http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/commissioning/site/bbc-quotas-targets.pdf>

Contact: Julia Redwood

[Julia@prospero.com.au](mailto:Julia@prospero.com.au)

08 9336 6006