

# QSIC Forum

## 1 November 2008

### 2008 Queensland Screen Industry Forum

Venue: The Glasshouse, QUT Creative Industries Precinct,  
Parer Place via Musk Ave (behind Roundhouse Theatre),  
Kelvin Grove, Queensland (Parking available on-site)

Track 1	Building creative business base
Track 2	Building the skills base

## FORUM DISCUSSION AND OUTCOMES

### PANELISTS AND SPEAKERS

#### *Guest speaker*

- Anna Rooke, CEO, Creative Enterprise Australia

#### *Chair's Address*

- Cathy Overett, New Holland Pictures, Chair Queensland Screen Industry Council

#### *Building the Business Base Panelists*

- Cathy Overett, New Holland Pictures, Chair Queensland Screen Industry Council
- Tony Cavanaugh, Liberty Films
- Mark Fludder, Department of Tourism, Industry and Regional Development
- Geoff Portman, QUT Film School
- Veronica Fury, Fury Productions
- Nino Martinetti, ACS
- Shirley Pierce, Higher Ground Media
- Henry Tefay, PFTC

#### *Building the Skills Base Panelists*

- Sally McKenzie, AWG/ADG
- Nino Martinetti, ACS
- Kerry O'Rourke, QPix
- Denise Wiseman, DETA
- Michelle Campbell, Gold Coast TAFE
- Sam Nicolosi, CISC
- Alex Daw, AFTRS
- Craig Caldwell, Griffith Film School
- Geoffrey Cooper, Channel 10

### KEY CONCLUSIONS

- The key goals and strategies of QSIC were broadly endorsed with 22 submissions being lodged by participants post the Forum. These will be reviewed by QSIC at its next meeting.
- Industry needs to focus on building sustainable businesses and minimize its focus on a funding model as a key driver. QSIC can play a role in driving such change.
- QSIC and PFTC Board needs to work together to review and address implications for Queensland of changes in the policy landscape being driven by Screen Australia.
- On-the-job training is the best model for both students and emerging filmmakers. The training system and existing employers need to review current models and create a new form of internship-based training scheme.
- Support for further seminars/forums – perhaps covering specific topics with guest speakers.
- QSIC needs to formalize but not necessarily as a membership/fee-based entity.

## GUEST SPEAKER

### Anna Rooke, CEO, Creative Enterprise Australia

- QUT Creative Enterprise Australia is the commercial arm of QUT's ground-breaking \$60m Creative Industries Precinct located in Brisbane's knowledge corridor at Kelvin Grove. CEA is Australia's only specialist business incubator and business support organisation dedicated to meeting the needs of the Creative Industries (CI) Sector. CEA offers a range of products and programs designed to assist start up and early stage Creative Industries businesses:
  - Business Incubation for the CI Sector at the Creative Industries Enterprise Centre at Kelvin Grove, Brisbane.
  - Creative Launch Pad - business advisory and mentoring support programs for businesses in the CI sector.
  - A specialist investment program, designed specifically to meet the needs of early stage CI businesses.
  - A program of training and other events to support networking and knowledge transfer in the CI Sector.
  - Business loans of \$15,000 available.
- Contact Cynthia Macnee for advice on Mentoring and Joanne Kenny for Internships.

## QSIC CHAIR ADDRESS

Welcome to the inaugural screen industry forum.

Today is the culmination of some two years work. It began with the government's Skills Formation Strategy turning their attention to the film and television industry.

Various groups of industry folk were gathered to see what issues they had with education and training in their respective areas. But a question kept being asked : What's the point of training people when there are no jobs to go to?

Maybe this Strategy was putting the cart before the horse and maybe we should be looking at how to build the industry to ensure there are jobs for graduates to go to. And so the remit grew from there.

Bret Mannison has been brought to us by the three government stakeholders in this process, DETA, DTRDI and PFTC. He's done a great job of facilitating our process to date, from the small focus groups to larger industry gathering, to the election of a leaders group and ultimately to the formation of the Queensland Screen Industry Council. QSIC. There will be more later on QSIC, who we are and what we are about.

But first, to the Queensland Screen Industry. Is there such a thing?

I can remember when I went back to do my Grad Dip in Media Production in 1994, Julie James Bailey was one of my lecturers and she make the claim that there wasn't a Qld film industry, that it was even debatable if there was an Australian film industry. There was uproar in the classroom, but she was right then, and it may still be right today.

What is an industry? If you look up the dictionary it defines it as "the aggregate of manufacturing or technically productive enterprises in a particular field, often named after its principal product: the automobile industry; the steel industry."

But key to this is that it is the "commercial PRODUCTION and SALE of goods".

What we have had until now have been two things.

We have had a cottage industry – some have referred to us as basketweavers. I would like to think we were a little more than that, cottage industry is good - of writers, directors and producers, working away in their garrets and bedrooms to churn out a script or a documentary or something that hopefully someone will buy. And many have.

And we have had a service industry - the studio, crews and post facilities that have serviced offshore footloose productions, mostly American, and to some extent interstate production. This is not a Queensland film industry, this is Qld as Hollywood's backlot.

There was an article in last Saturday's Courier Mail that talked about just this, lamenting the downturn in the Qld industry, quoting only the American films that weren't coming and citing TV drama as the bedrock of the Qld industry. The Strip, Sea Patrol, H2O.

Of that list, there was one Queensland production, K9. No mention was made of the 5 features made over the last few years, of the numerous low budget, credit card films that have been ticking over, of the prolific documentary production that comes out of Queensland, of the strength of our animation and our new media. We're here, we're doing great work and it's time we spoke up.

So do we have a Queensland film industry? Do we want one? How do we build it? How do we define it? And where do we all fit into it? That is the beginning of the conversation that we are here to have today.

Firstly, QSIC would like to define it as the Screen Industry. Film Industry is a very limiting term in the 21st century. Screen takes into account the evolution of the way we capture the moving image and the platforms we deliver to. What we are making are products for the screen, from Imax to cinemas to television to computers to mobile phones and beyond.

For the creatives amongst us, this may sound a little cold. I had my knuckles rapped by Fortissimo for referring to Unfinished Sky as a product. I was told "It's not a product, it's a film". The fact is it is both. As creatives, we pour our hearts and souls into crafting a

story and bringing it to the screen with all its beauty and emotion. But having made our masterpiece, it's nothing if it sits on a shelf. We have to bring it to its audience, and for that we have to sell it as a product.

And this brings me to my second point, where we need to focus on what makes us an industry. IP. To really build an industry, we need to create a product, build that product, own it, sell it, earn from it. Fee for service is not enough.

So this is where QSIC's focus lies, and it is why our emphasis is on producers and writers. Yes, it is also about building the infrastructure around it, about developing fabulous directors and training world class crew and facilities to enable us to deliver the product to world standards. But we will never have a sustainable industry if we don't develop and own the IP. And that is down to the writers, producers and other ideas people amongst you.

At the same time, we live in interesting times. It's a very volatile climate out there.

Screen Australia was in town this week, outlining their new guidelines.

Screen Australia is no longer going to fund short films – development or production. Nor is it going to fund script development for new or emerging screenwriters. That door has closed. Someone at the Sydney briefing session was heard to say, that's the end of the basketweavers.

Screen Australia argues that short filmmakers now have increased access to new and affordable technologies. They expect any support now will be handled by local networks of state agencies, film schools and screen resource organisations such as QPix, who are closer to the pools of emerging talent. Will the resources be there to allow these entities to deliver?

At the same time, PFTC's newish board has asked where's our muriel's wedding, where's our shine. They are changing their guidelines to no long guarantee a 10% investment in films that have the rest of their finance in place. They only want to invest in projects audiences want to see. But how do they make those decisions?

The economic downturn has people jumpy. Treasury won't be giving our sector any more money and is questioning why it gives its money to us anyhow when essential services like hospital and schools are crying out for more.

And then there's the Dept of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry, formerly State Development, who has been focusing on creative industries, arguing that it is time we became economically viable in our own right. It's all about building businesses and finding the right business models. It's about innovative thinking and vision.

There has never been a more important time for us to engage meaningfully with government.

I would ask anyone who may have come here today with hatchets to bury or gripes to air, please leave them at the door. Today is not about the past, it is about the future.

A wave of enormous change is bearing down upon us and we can either rise to the challenges and ride the wave to new and interesting shores, or we can tread water and be dumped.

The new era is about screen as a creative industry, about building businesses and IP, and about filmmakers working together to develop the skills to do so. It's scary, it will be challenging but it's also exciting.

To this end, we have organised today into four sessions. First up will be about QSIC, bringing you up to date on who we are and where we've got to and the opportunities that lie ahead. We will then have two panel sessions focused on the two core issues we face. Before lunch we will be talking about building businesses, and after lunch we will turn our attention to skills and training. We'll end the day with a discussion on QSIC governance, looking at potential models and working out the best way forward. And to encourage you to stay on and have your say through this drier session, there will be drinks at the end of the day.

But first, I would like to introduce to you our opening speaker. Anna Rooke is Anna is CEO of Creative Enterprise Australia, who is one of our sponsors here today. Prior to coming to Australia two years ago, Anna worked for over 10 years to support the growth of bioscience, creative, digital and arts based businesses in the UK.

Creative Enterprise is the commercial arm of QUT's Creative Industries Precinct. They are Australia's only specialist business incubator and business support organisation dedicated to meeting the needs of the Creative Industries Sector. What that means we're about to find out.

## QSIC STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

- QSIC formed as a result of the Skills Formation Strategy driven by the Queensland Government.
- QSIC members elected through open industry meeting on 30/4/08.
- Currently working on Strategic Plan for the industry to be completed by April 2009.
- Goals of QSIC: Improve, Expand, and Promote the Queensland Screen Industry. See draft strategic plan on [www.QSIC.net.au](http://www.QSIC.net.au)
- QSIC role not to duplicate the advocacy function of the Guilds. QSIC seeks to work in partnership with government to improve policy implementation.
- QSIC needs to look at how it engages with the Indigenous filmmakers.
- Call for business focused networking opportunities (eg. commissioning editors) and for better communication about what's happening in the industry.
- The QSIC initiative was generally supported, however, the notion of another membership-based organization was not necessarily needed. Other models should be explored.
- Strong support for QSIC to advance initiatives that promote the Queensland industry.
- Support for further seminars/forums – perhaps covering specific topics with guest speakers.
- QSIC needs to formalize but not necessarily as a membership/fee based entity.

## STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE QSIC MODEL.

### *Cathy Overett (QSIC Chair/New Holland Pictures)*

- QSIC has met with the PFTC Board and is pursuing a strategic relationship. PFTC Board is focused on issues of script development.
- QSIC and PFTC Board needs to work together to review and address implications for Queensland of changes in the policy landscape being driven by Screen Australia.
- Good timing – window of opportunity for QSIC to work with government.
- Guilds within QSIC now have an alternative policy voice.

### *Henry Tefay (PFTC):*

- This is an opportunity for industry and government to join forces and form a more constructive relationship.
- Government (both federal and state) provides a considerable percentage of finance. The industry/government relationship should be seen more as a partnership. Industry needs to be more engaged with policy making.
- The QSIC model of collaboration and partnership has not been tried before in Queensland.
- PFTC will consider advice from QSIC along with that from other sources and groups.

### *Bret Mannison (Forum Facilitator)*

- Government policy landscape in investment in cultural industries has changed considerably over the past decade. Greater expectations on Industry to demonstrate business acumen. The argument around cultural investment outcomes remains vexed.
- QSIC has formed out of a unique partnership between the Department of Education Training and the Arts, the Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry, and the Pacific Film and Television Commission. Multidimensional remit and premise of QSIC. The Industry as a window of opportunity to benefit through the willingness of government to work collaboratively.
- Good public policy comes from good engagement with government, guilds and industry bodies. A strong cohesive voice is the best way forward.

### *Denise Wiseman (DETA)*

- Impressed by industry response and interest in driving direction in partnership with government.
- Patience is required as change processes take time but DETA and QSIC are in for the long haul.

*Sally McKenzie (Representing AWG and ADG)*

- We have an opportunity led by the talent base in Queensland.
- QSIC and the Guilds are important vehicles for communing with government.

## **DISCUSSION ABOUT INDUSTRY BUSSINESS AND SKILLS**

- It's not just what a script is about or how it's written, often it's the key elements of audience and the business value proposition that are the key.
- Queensland needs more producers. Over last 15 years industry has been disparate in Queensland and QSIC is an opportunity to formalise our engagement to a give a united voice.
- A sophisticated example of industry/government partnership in the film area is [www.skillset.org](http://www.skillset.org) in the UK.
- Good scripts is where it all starts and this needs to be a focus in Queensland. Greater audience-focus should be a priority.
- Need to look at ways of building sustainable businesses – not just projects – and ways that industry can drive this and how government can contribute.
- Need to strengthen relationships between writers and producers and improve quality of 'pitching'.
- Industry structure about to go through significant as a result of technology-led new business models and distribution/platform opportunities.
- Business environment changing rapidly – filmmakers need to be prepared to exploit new opportunities and revenue streams.
- Need to work smart with government.
- Developing a business model built on government funding is not sustainable.
- On-the-job training is the best model for both students and emerging filmmakers. The training system and existing employers need to review current models and create a new form of internship-based training scheme.
- Creating a 'on-stop-shop' for internships should be considered where 'talent' is pooled making it easier for employers to access.
- Channel 10 is one of the few employers providing internship style opportunities and would be interested in working with QSIC and government to increase opportunities.
- Business skills across the industry are also an issue although it's not clear why the existing short courses are not adequate.
- Industry needs to move towards a business model and away from a funding model. QSIC can play a role in driving such change.