



**AUSTRALIAN
FILM TELEVISION
AND RADIO SCHOOL**

Statement of Intent 2017-18

This is an exciting time to have taken on the position of Chair of AFTRS.

I believe that ideas, communication skills and creativity are the forces that will drive the Australian knowledge economy into the future, through our screens and broadcast media and beyond.

We need to invest in ideas and to embrace, harness and back Australian creativity.

Internationally, recognition is growing that creative jobs are the jobs of the future.¹ Screen Australia's 2016 *Screen Currency* report found that "In 2014/15 the Australian screen production industry contributed over \$3 billion in value add to the economy and over 25,000 full-time equivalent jobs".² AFTRS is training up the next generation of Australian storytellers to inspire and challenge us all, and is equipping today's industry to tell, shape and sell these stories in new ways.

As you know, AFTRS is Australia's national training, education and research institution for screen and broadcast media. Its purpose is *'To find and empower Australian talent to shape and share their stories with the world by delivering future-focused, industry-relevant education, research and training.'*

Talent is key to success in the globally competitive screen and broadcast sectors, where Australian creative product vies for audience attention in a content-saturated world. We are building a creative skill set and hub for career-long learning that is held in high esteem around the world, generating huge benefits for all Australians.

Innovation and bold risk-taking, based in strong storytelling and craft skills, will ensure that Australian creative intellectual property succeeds commercially and continues to capture the hearts and minds of local and international audiences. The AFTRS vision is *'To be the reference point for innovation in screen, sound, and story-making, globally.'*

Role of AFTRS

AFTRS is ranked among the top 20 film schools internationally³, and is recognised for the quality of its teaching and its relevance to industry.⁴ In 2017-18 the priorities of AFTRS will be to deliver on the objectives of its corporate plan in the following focus areas:

- Talent development
- Industry training
- Outreach
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Innovation
- Communications

¹ http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/the_creative_economy_and_the_future_of_employment.pdf

² <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/fact-finders/reports-and-key-issues/reports-and-discussion-papers/screen-currency>

³ <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/lists/top-15-international-film-schools-revealed-1029763>

⁴ SARA AFTRS Brand Benchmarking Research, August 2017. Unpublished.



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Talent Development

AFTRS core work is to skill up industry-ready graduates with the craft, creativity and capacities they need to succeed today and in the future. AFTRS also focusses on generating career pathways for its graduates via internships, strong industry networks and on-the-job experience delivered in partnership with the sector. A 2016 alumni survey found that 74% of AFTRS graduates are currently employed in the industry.⁵

Industry Training

AFTRS also delivers substantial skills development for industry: from short courses to industry-aligned degrees, ensuring that Australian screen practitioners are world-class and are engaged with new technologies, new audiences and new opportunities for storytelling, in any format, on any device. The 2016 AFTRS industry skills survey found that 90% of industry practitioners wanted access to more training opportunities in the future.⁶ The survey also found that the sector would benefit from a greater focus on creative entrepreneurship, which has led to new training in future-focussed business skills and the development of AFTRS Grow Initiative, a new program focusing on inspiring and training creative leaders for the rapidly evolving screen marketplace.

Outreach

The measure of success for screen culture is a high level of engagement amongst audiences, across communities and across generations. AFTRS **outreach** works to foster a love and appreciation for Australian screen and broadcast culture and builds participation - empowering Australians to tell their stories, wherever they come from and whoever they are. In 2016-17 AFTRS ran more than 350 programs undertaken by around 5700 students nationally, from aspiring backyard digital storytellers to the highest levels of screen practice.

Diversity and Inclusion

Aligned with this commitment to participation and engagement, AFTRS has made a significant contribution to **diversity and inclusion**. AFTRS recognises that in order to be relevant, representative and commercially viable, the screen industry must address the current lack of representation of people from diverse backgrounds both in front of and behind the camera. This was identified in the *AFTRS Inclusive Pathways Framework for Storytelling Talent*. There is more to be done to ensure that enrolled AFTRS students are recruited from a wide range of geographic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.

⁵ AFTRS alumni survey June 2016

⁶ https://www.aftrs.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/56846/AFTRS-Future-Vision-2021.pdf





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AFTRS is committed to ensuring that the School reflects Australian society by supporting diversity across its activities, and is also taking the lead in industry promoting diversity and inclusion. An example of this has been Talent Camp, a national program run in partnership with Screen Australia and all state screen agencies, designed to develop emerging storytellers and screen content creatives from diverse backgrounds via intensive workshops held in each state from September to November 2017, with over 80 participants nationwide.

Following on from the *Inclusive Pathways Framework*, which identified the need for a whole-of-industry approach to creating career pathways for groups underrepresented both on and behind our screens, AFTRS initiated and led the Screen Diversity and Inclusion Network (www.sdin.com.au) – with Australian broadcasters, funding agencies and guilds as members.

Research + Communication

AFTRS resources the industry, its partners and its audiences with new thinking and **research** that push the boundaries of technological innovation in storytelling and audience engagement. Effective **communication** strategies help these insights, as well as the creative output of the AFTRS community, realise substantial industry and public benefit.

Relationship with Government

AFTRS maintains productive and open lines of communication with the Minister's office and Department of Communication and the Arts around its programs, initiatives and strategic direction, as well as highlighting opportunities for Government to engage with the activities of the school. We will continue to contribute to the development and delivery of screen policy and practices in a period of rapid and exciting change. The School supports through its activities Government incentives and support for local production to generate original IP, contribute to the cultural landscape and build Australian skills and talent.

Innovation

AFTRS welcomes the Government's focus on **innovation**, and sees tremendous scope for the School to contribute to this agenda, in both policy and practical outcomes. AFTRS seeks to innovate in its offerings and practices, working in partnership to maximise resources and in a spirit of inquiry and exploration to charter new terrain for the sector. Current and existing examples include capacity building in new technologies (such as narrative storytelling via augmented reality and digital production for new platforms), the development of new frontiers in assessing audience engagement (such as via Australia's first Biometrics Lab for Audience Engagement), and delving into extensions of existing forms (such as binaural podcasting techniques in the experimental *Precipice* program).





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Own Source Revenue

AFTRS has long been finding ways to translate its media expertise and communication skills training into **own source revenue** that also deliver substantial community benefit. Current examples of this include contracts to deliver communications training in the transport and education sectors. There is broader social and economic benefit in generating new capacities in the Australian community and workforce with soft skills, as well as bold and original thinking.

Cultural Diplomacy

AFTRS has sought to add value and pursue productive partnerships with other arms of Government to build Australia's international relationships via **cultural diplomacy** and exportable models of training, original IP and skills. AFTRS is part of Austrade's Screen Round Table and has had conversations with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade about how it can help strengthen relationships in the region and beyond.

AFTRS is in the process of exploring the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students to include a small number of international students in its programs. AFTRS already trains New Zealand Film Commission producers through an initiative set up in 2017. Another exciting example of a successful international partnership, and a priority for our international engagement, has been with Shanghai Media Group. The formal Government to Government training program has been in development for several years, and launched officially for the first time in 2017 offering production and development training in TV formats. These exchanges not only build capacities across the region and generate new revenue for the School, they build relationships and new levels of mutual understanding that deliver huge, long-term benefits for country-to-country engagement.

Operations and Governance

AFTRS recognises that it is uniquely resourced in the training and education space with Government funding, enabling the School to offer high-quality and high-value courses and maintain strong relationships with industry. It takes very seriously the responsibilities that come with being entrusted with taxpayer funding and is committed to delivering back public value through its activities.

AFTRS is actively engaged with the requirements of the PGPA Act 2013 and is seeking to ensure that its performance is measurable and trackable and that its operations are efficient and transparent. AFTRS continues to review its operations and finances to ensure a programmatic and long-term planning approach to the use of resources, course offerings and partnerships to ensure that these strengths and capacities are harnessed to deliver maximum public benefit.





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AFTRS proactively collaborates with other agencies within the Communications and Arts portfolio. A recent example is the Arts8 Collaborative Project, bringing together creative practice from the Australian Youth Orchestra; the National Institute of Dramatic Art; the Flying Fruit Fly Circus; the National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association; the Australian Ballet and AFTRS.

These sorts of explorations and partnerships, as well as the collaborations with funding agencies, philanthropic organisations and production companies to deliver bespoke training, scholarships and internships, extend the AFTRS' impact well beyond the walls of the school.

Conclusion

AFTRS will continue to establish itself as an international hub for screen culture, screen practice and industry development. Its aim is to deliver an ongoing public benefit back to all Australians, as participants, audiences and beneficiaries of a vibrant, relevant and contemporary screen culture generated by skilled and inspiring storytellers, craftspeople and creative entrepreneurs. The focus on entrepreneurship in the coming year will seek to build the skills framework to develop viable business models for screen production into the future.

Under my stewardship, I will be encouraging AFTRS to think about how it is positioned as a prestigious elite training organisation and to gain greater recognition for this important role in Australia's media and creative landscape. I see great potential to build on all the School's great work to profile itself and its graduates more proactively to international as well as local markets.

We look forward to working with Government to build on and realise these ambitions and to continue to build the creative bedrock of our most powerful cultural mediums – film, radio and television and their multiple extensions in the digital era.

Russel Howcroft
Chair

