

Statement of Intent

As the nation's screen and broadcast school, AFTRS makes a vital contribution to Australian culture, commercial success and international standing by finding, developing and supporting Australian storytelling talent. We are well positioned to lead in the development of the creative capacities of our future workforce and to build the skills required for future forms of work in the Creative Economy.

We believe in demonstrating mastery and daring, prioritising merit, practicing generosity and working together. These values mean that we are constantly challenging ourselves and building our sector up to strive for greatness and to find new opportunities in a period of significant disruption.

Role of AFTRS

AFTRS is a unique cultural institution and hub for industry. But it is, first and foremost, a teaching institution with practical outcomes, building a skilled industry of talented creative practitioners and storytellers. We support excellence, and provide our students with production skills and knowledge so that they can contribute to the screen and broadcast industries.

AFTRS has been a fully self-accredited Higher Education Provider since 2005, maintaining high levels of academic quality and governance overseen by the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency. We produce highly skilled, 'work ready' creative entrepreneurs who are the future leaders of the screen and broadcast industries.

Excellence in our teaching and practice-led learning model is evidenced by the successes our students continue to have. We have fantastic success with student films, web series and podcasts, including international awards and international festival selection including our successful student feature *Sequin in a Blue Room* (Audience Award at Sydney Film Festival), webseries *Gut Feeling* (multiple international awards at WebFests and a commission from Stan) and *Sweet Tooth* (winner of the prestigious CILECT CAPA Award), to name just a few.

Industry Alignment

AFTRS is embedded in the Australia screen and broadcast industries. As noted in your Statement of Expectations, AFTRS has over the past year deepened and consolidated its relationships with Industry through sector-informed Awards courses and Industry Certificates program, which draw on insights from a range of employers and practitioners on our Industry Advisory Panels.

Earlier this year, those insights were complemented by our Industry Skills Survey which surveyed 75 companies and 534 individual practitioners and found that 93% saw AFTRS as relevant to the sector, 85% recognised that AFTRS understands industry training needs and 83% perceived AFTRS as innovative.

AFTRS has also, over the last 18 months, formalised an internships and traineeships program with over 100 opportunities for AFTRS students and graduates in a wide range of screen and radio companies and productioners. 84% of surveyed companies who had been involved in the program said that AFTRS students made a positive contribution to their companies.

This work-readiness and strong, industry-relevant skill level has been recognised in our recent Graduate Outcomes Survey which found that 73% of AFTRS graduates had found employment within 4 months of graduation, significantly higher than most creative arts graduates, and 76% of those were in screen arts and broadcast roles. In Radio, our Graduate employment rates are at 98%.

Our graduates work in industries that not only grow our economy, but that enrich our society and help shape our collective values. And by doing so, we help build the cultural vitality, cohesion and productivity of Australian society and our economy.

AFTRS today

In 2018, we streamlined our Awards courses into three main strands, focusing on excellence in creative education. The more coherent offering is aligned with the needs of industry by providing a clear pathway for our students through our courses.

Our courses are continually evaluated and refined to ensure we achieve and maintain academic excellence, while aligning to the current and future needs of the creative and broadcast industries. This core business – preparing graduates to work and lead in these creative industries – supplemented by programs to engage and inspire young creatives, and programs for creatives who are already working in the industry.

We want to find and develop young creatives from all the diverse walks of Australian life, and set them on a path to telling their Australian story. Through our Awards courses, and on to careers in the industry. But we also continue to support them and other practicing creatives throughout their careers.

We supplement our core Awards courses with an extensive offering of short courses and further study that continue to build skills and update knowledge of new technologies and know-how for practicing creatives.

From our targeted outreach programs at schools like Media Lab and emerging practitioner programs like Talent Camp, to our core business courses and on to further training or short courses that are practical and industry-relevant.

We build and strengthen relationships with Australians wherever they might live, from prospective students to alumni. AFTRS offers a supportive environment where students are inspired to excel, and to make connections with other creatives in the School and the wider industry.

We lead industry conversations via events and platforms such as *8 From 8* featuring great Australian storytellers from each of our states and territories, *ReFrame* on how to manage creative businesses into the future and our *Lumina* podcast series.

Our strategic pillars shape and impact everything we do.

- **Finding Talent**

We have outreach programs that identify and engage creatives at school and beyond. These include workshops with diverse community and cultural organisations; Talent Camp, a national project in partnership with Screen Australia and all state screen agencies targeting emerging creatives from underrepresented communities; scholarships, including targeted Indigenous scholarships, community scholarships and community workshops. We provide secondary teachers with resources for schools through the MediaLab website, building media literacy and media production skills for primary and secondary students across Australia and continue to work on extending this offering.

This year we launched recruitment roadshows across the country to extend our reach and ensure we are finding the best Australian talent to bring into the School.

- **Developing Talent**

We deliver excellence in education and training through our Bachelor of Arts, producing multi-skilled content creators; a Master of Arts in 10 Disciplines and Graduate Diploma in Radio. We work hard to ensure that our students are representative of the larger Australian community, and we deliver courses that are relevant to the needs of the industry. We are connected to the industry by employing current practitioners as teachers, lecturers and tutors, and hosting guest lecturers. We also develop key industry partnerships, manage internships and run industry showcases. AFTRS also continuously works to improve the welfare of its students through a responsive student centre and support programs. We offer scholarships and tailored initiatives for those from traditionally under-represented communities including rural and remote areas, and First Nations people. The AFTRS curriculum focuses on encouraging diversity in content creation and representation on screen and other content.

- **Supporting Talent**

We promote and support our alumni and other industry practitioners with a slate of courses and programs that ensure that they remain equipped with knowledge of the latest technology and trends, and they future of storytelling. We partner with other organisations to showcase productions, and we partner with industry practitioners who provide invaluable advice to our creatives. AFTRS also engages with industry at conferences and festivals. We research and innovate, with experimental projects around technology and storytelling. These practical projects with real outcomes generate applied knowledge that empowers our students and staff alike and brings new approaches to creative practice.

AFTRS' expertise supports a thriving creative industry where Australian audiences are engaged with Australian content, however it is delivered.

The following sections address the priorities outlined in your letter (contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, diversity, research, innovation, own source revenue and the creative economy).

First Nations voices

AFTRS has a dedicated Indigenous Unit that runs vital programs to build capacities in creation and collaboration in storytelling that is inclusive of First Nations voices. AFTRS has a dedicated Elder in Residence, formerly renowned storyteller and historian Uncle Bruce Pascoe, who features in our 2019 podcast *Talk Talk*, and now recently appointed Sonia Smallacombe, who draws on academic research experience and more than a decade representing Australian Indigenous perspectives at the United Nations. The Indigenous Unit runs dedicated workshops and training programs Indigenous creative practitioners and support good practice in the School and across the industry with dedicated curriculum resources, Indigenous protocols, partnerships and events such as the popular *Black Talks* series.

Diversity and Inclusion

AFTRS has taken a leadership role in fostering a more diverse and inclusive screen industry. 2019 marks the third year of the Screen Diversity and Inclusion Network, founded by AFTRS in 2016, which has recently launched the AFTRS and SDIN supported Everyone Project – a diversity measurement tool that will help the industry to benchmark and track the diversity of practitioners and on-screen talent across all Australian production.

Within the School, AFTRS has set itself diversity target for both students and staff and proactively seeks and secures pathways for applications, scholarships, pastoral support and recruitment to support these targets. We have an active Inclusion Action Group and publish resources such as the Inclusive Storytelling resource to help support good practice in the Industry.

We have a range of new scholarships in place to support our diversity agenda, with support from industry partners and private benefactors to enable talented students from diverse backgrounds to attend AFTRS.

AFTRS has been undertaking a phased Housing Affordability study to explore options to support students from all backgrounds to manage Sydney challenging rental market to be able to live and study without rental stress.

Applied Innovation and Research

AFTRS' vision is *to be the reference point for innovation in screen, sound, and story-making, globally*. As part of this vision, AFTRS supports the creative vision and capacities of students, industry practitioners and partners through applied research projects.

AFTRS Corporate Plan includes a commitment to: *“run applied industry innovation projects, to explore new applications of technology and creative practice”* and *“resource the industry with the latest insights, access and innovative ideas.”*

AFTRS Applied Innovation Research projects experiment and innovate around technology, storytelling and the audience experience to benefit screen practice, new business models and creative education. We seek to incubate and support projects with purpose and real-world outcomes. As a practice-led institution, we experiment first and publish later, sharing findings and insights for the benefit of the sector, rather than starting with extended periods of research.

These insights generate applied knowledge to empower AFTRS students, staff and the broader screen and broadcast industries to be future-focused in their approaches to creative practice. We want our expertise to support a thriving industry, in which audiences are engaged with great Australian content, however it is delivered.

AFTRS seeks to partner within and outside the screen and broadcast industries in its experimentation, and seeks practical and commercial outcomes of research innovations. Outcomes of these projects include:

- VR Noir – narrative based applications of VR
- Precipice – binaural production techniques for podcast
- Biometrics – applications of new measurement tools for audience engagement
- Blockchain for the Arts – a collaboration with RMIT, Screen Australia and the Australia Council on the potential for distributed ledger technologies to support creative arts practice
- Lumina – a podcast series on the intersections of storytelling and technology and on the potential of Australia's Creative Economy.

Our relationship with Government and arts agencies

AFTRS works closely with other creative and arts agencies, both at the federal and state levels. We recognise the need to work together to deliver outcomes for creatives in whichever area of the industry they join. From our close relationships with Screen Australia and state screen agencies to roll out Talent Camp, to our engagement via regular Heads of Arts Agencies meetings, these partnerships play a vital role in AFTRS achieving its strategic outcomes to find, develop and support talent.

Our relationship with the Minister's department is open, constructive and mutually supportive. We look forward to the appointment of our new Chief Executive and continuing to shape our School to deliver in developing talent and providing relevant industry training.

We particularly welcome and want to foster closer engagement with the School and our programs, through events such as screenings and talks both at AFTRS and Parliament House, to increase engagement with, and knowledge about, we do, and how we contribute to telling the Australian story.

Efficiency and Own Source Revenue

Our streamlined course offerings are an important step not only for delivering industry-appropriate education and training, but also in promoting organisational efficiency. We have a culture of

accountability for expenditure of our government and own source funds, with strong leadership and guidance by Council and its Finance, Audit and Risk Management sub-committee.

Council and management are also focused on achieving and exceeding AFTRS' target of 25 per cent own source revenue, to supplement our federal budget allocation. We are well on track to achieving this target, having recently expanded our offering in Corporate Training and developing new offerings related to skills in business, digital and communications areas.

In addition, we are expanding new sources of revenue via a limited allocation of places to international students in our globally recognised Masters program, and exploring opportunities for international applications of our skills training. We are also in the process of progressing partnerships with other Australian educational providers around licencing the IP in some elements of our curriculum.

Creative Economy


AFTRS has been engaging with the opportunities of the Australian Creative Economy and sees great potential in new forms of productivity focused on IP, creativity and innovation. Following on from my National Press Club address in August last year, the Creative Economy deficit, there has been substantial support across the sector and beyond for a new emphasis on the need for creativity across the whole economy, not just 'the Arts'.

As a skills and training focused organisation, AFTRS sees great potential for future jobs and employment that draw on our great capacities for ideas and new ways of thinking that creative skills enable. The Bureau of Communications and Arts research Future Skills for the Creative Economy research found that creative jobs were growing at twice the rate at the rest of the economy and we see this as a tremendous time of opportunity to build Australian capacities in this space.

Australians already achieve great things creatively, we feel that there is great potential for the benefits of our creativity to build a brighter future for all Australians.

I look forward to engaging further on these ideas with you in our future conversations and in events and opportunities to build on your relationship with AFTRS. It is a great hub and resource for a dynamic and changing industry, supplying great people, skills and ideas and it is my privilege to Chair the Council that leads it.

Warm regards,



Russel Howcroft
Chair