

1 October 2021

The Hon Paul Fletcher MP
Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

Thank you for your letter dated 22 July 2021, outlining your expectations for the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS) for 2021-22.

I duly note your requested particular areas of strategic focus and priority, being:

- working collaboratively with the screen and broadcast sector to capitalise on the boom of screen production in Australia;
- working with productions to identify training and skills development opportunities, including addressing capacity gaps and embracing emerging technology;
- engaging with the Australian games development industry on training opportunities to support it to take advantage of the Government's Digital Games Tax Offset, which will increase its market share in a rapidly expanding global sector and grow highly-skilled transferable jobs;
- continuing to explore opportunities to grow private sector support and increase own-source revenue;
- continuing to undertake data collection and research to strengthen understanding of the challenges and opportunities for the sector; and
- considering opportunities to recognise the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture to Australian society.

You will find in this letter AFTRS' Statement of Intent for 2021-22 to address your expectations noted above.

Statement of Intent 2021-2022

Role of AFTRS

AFTRS was established by a bipartisan Act of Parliament in 1973 to provide world-leading education, training and research to Australians, so that Australian culture and stories thrive both locally and globally. The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasised how important Australian stories are, both across the nation and around the world, in allowing Australians to connect and engage with each other, our culture and our rich history. The School works hand in hand with the screen and broadcast industries to provide world-leading training across the country to ensure these stories continue to be told in bold, engaging and culturally respectful ways.

This close relationship with industry is unique and ensures an AFTRS education, be it an award course, industry certificate or short course, fosters the skills, creativity and ambition our graduates need to forge sustainable and brilliant careers.



AFTRS Strategy: Creating the Future

Early in 2022, AFTRS will be launching its new 5-year Corporate Strategy: *Creating the Future*.

The strategy's three pillars, national reach, excellence and sustainability, will allow AFTRS to continue to meet its purpose in an increasingly dynamic and expanding operating landscape, including opportunities for digitisation and the growth of the screen and audio content sectors.

This strategy positions the School as an agile, future-facing organisation able to adapt to emerging opportunities and needs, without losing sight of its remit to excellence.

NATIONAL REACH

Over the next twelve months, AFTRS will embark on its plan to design and implement a micro-credentialled, flexible model of delivery that will make its courses accessible and available to the most talented learners across Australia. A priority is to partner with First Nations communities that now have access, through the NBN rollout, to remote learning opportunities. AFTRS will be guided by each community's priorities and needs in putting together capacity building training partnerships. AFTRS' first project is with the Injinoo community in Cape York.

First Nations Culture

In partnership with Netflix, AFTRS will be offering a number of Indigenous scholarships and programs in 2021-22 as part of the Netflix Indigenous Scholarship Fund. This Fund is designed to elevate and support Indigenous storytellers and creatives. First Nations values are central to the School's new strategy and 5-year plan. AFTRS is assembling a Council of Elders in 2021 from community members recognised as being in positions of high regard within their communities and having knowledge and experience of Indigenous cultural heritage relating to education, training and creative media practice. The Council of Elders will consult with the School as AFTRS moves to implement its First Nations Strategy and support AFTRS' First Nations graduates, students and community media makers by providing guidance on cultural and economic development through evaluating culturally safe pathways to enter the screen and broadcast industry.

AFTRS' commitment to embedding First Nations values throughout the School will further ensure opportunities to recognise and celebrate the contribution of First Nations storytelling and culture to Australian society.

EXCELLENCE

AFTRS defines its approach to excellence as industry-aligned and future-facing.

Industry Alignment

The Australian screen and production sector is in a period of substantive growth. Generous and successful Government incentives, such as the Location Incentive and Post Digital and Visual Effects (PDV) offset, and global demand for content are creating new, exciting long-term opportunities for Australians. This growth in activity has created a clear and urgent need for more world-class, highly trained Australian craftspeople and specialists. AFTRS will continue to work closely with State and Government agencies and peak industry bodies (including NIDA, Screen Producers Australia, South Australian Film Corporation and Screen Australia) to meet these emerging needs and build a robust pipeline of highly trained talent.

Minister, as noted in your Statement of Expectations, the Government's Digital Games Tax Offset will create many opportunities for growth in the Australian games industry. AFTRS is actively engaging in this space by developing a suite of Games Business electives for AFTRS' Master of Arts Screen: Business, in partnership with the Interactive Games & Entertainment Association. This exciting partnership will empower practitioners in the Games Design industry with the business and leadership skills required to support this rapidly expanding sector. AFTRS is scoping



further partnerships in this sector to integrate games design and visual effects across all course curricula to ensure these transferable skills are embedded in all our students and graduates.

This year AFTRS will continue to develop a model of integrated training that combines the best of on-the-job training with formal education: blending real-world learning driven by leading industry experts, with the critical thinking and adaptive creative skillsets vital to thrive in today's digital world. AFTRS will continue its very successful Graduate Program that acts as a transition from formal training into industry. This year's program secured twelve paid 13-week internship positions for the Bachelor of Arts Screen: Production graduates including ABC, SBS, Endemol Shine Australia, Fremantle and ITV Studios. All the graduates who took part in the program in 2020 secured full-time work after their internships. AFTRS' graduate employment remains consistently high; it is estimated 83% of Master of Arts Screen graduates (2019-2020) are currently working on, or have worked on, an Australian production.

To identify the challenges and opportunities for the talent development in this period of change and growth, AFTRS has commissioned a study conducted by SARA (Screen Audience Research Australia) into changing career pathways in the screen and broadcast industry. It has been co-developed with a range of industry organisations with an aim to provide data and recommendations on how government agencies, higher education and private companies can better support industry practitioners along their career pathway in this new world of digital disruption and growth.

Future-Focused

Early in 2022, AFTRS is launching its Digital Futures Lab; an industry partnered, future-focused space that will provide the sector and emerging talent with learning opportunities and new knowledge in the latest innovations in technology, thinking, skills, business planning and creativity, from visual effects, animation, motion capture and virtual production, to virtual reality and augmented reality.

The first phase of the AFTRS' Digital Futures Lab will be an industry sandpit that allows industry practitioners and emerging talent access to cutting edge technologies, starting with virtual production. This opportunity is out of reach for many Australian companies due to the prohibitive cost of the technology. AFTRS will embark on this first phase with a grant from the Government for a virtual production training facility. The facility will support a training partnership and significant investment from Matchbox and NBCUniversal Group to develop and deliver curricula in Virtual Production and grow an Australian ecosystem of skills and knowledge in this very exciting area of production.

To support the upskilling of industry and to deepen understanding and innovation in these emerging areas, AFTRS is launching a Digital Futures Summit Series to bring leaders together across industry, government and education to spark conversation around collaborating, adapting and capitalising on technological change in our industry.

SUSTAINABILITY

This year the School is focussing on ensuring its offerings and operations are agile, adaptive and scalable. This is critical in allowing AFTRS to grow its business and meet local, regional, state and territory need, while working to the capacity of its staff, resources and industries.

Own-Sourced Revenue

The School will continue to actively grow its own revenue streams, both with industry partners and private sector support. The School has already seen double-digit growth over the past year in corporate training. AFTRS is focused on continuing this growth in 2021-22, as well as sourcing new streams of own-sourced revenue with bespoke training for industry partners and licensing opportunities.



CONCLUSION

As the country recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, arts, culture and story are vital in reforging and reimagining our connections to each other and the world.

We look forward to actively working to meet the outcomes and objectives for 2021-22. We welcome the opportunity to engage further with our portfolio department regarding the opportunities within the industry. With its new 5-year strategy, AFTRS is perfectly positioned to continue to foster and support creative Australian talent, helping grow the screen, broadcast and games sectors and meaningfully contribute to Australian culture.

Yours sincerely,



Russel Howcroft
Chair of AFTRS Council

