

11 February 2026

The Hon Tony Burke MP
Minister for the Arts
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

AFTRS 2025-26 Statement of Intent

Thank you for your letter outlining the Government's expectations for the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) for the 2025–26 financial year. The AFTRS' Council welcomes your continued support and guidance, and we remain committed to delivering on the priorities set out in your Statement of Expectations, in alignment with *Revive*: Australia's National Cultural Policy, the AFTRS Act, and the PGPA Act.

We are proud of the School's contributions to a vibrant, resilient and diverse screen and broadcast sector, and we reaffirm our commitment to strengthening Australian stories and supporting the creative economy both nationally and internationally.

In response to your outlined priorities, please find a detailed response below. But, in summary, AFTRS will:

- **Advance *Revive* and Contribute to Future Policy**
Continue embedding the principles of *Revive* across our programs and strategic initiatives, and actively contribute to the development of the next National Cultural Policy.
- **Deliver Industry-Relevant Training and Innovation**
Uphold our statutory obligations by delivering high-quality, industry-aligned education, talent development, outreach, and applied research that respond to the evolving needs of the screen and broadcast industries.
- **Support Equity and Inclusion**
We will continue to progress inclusive, culturally responsive practices, strengthening sector outreach, and supporting research that enhances opportunities and creative participation for d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers, including working with your department to implement actions under Equity: the Arts and Disability Associated Plan.
- **Scale the Industry Skills Framework**
Expand the implementation of our Industry Skills Framework with government and industry colleagues to identify and address critical skills gaps nationally, and provide actionable insights to support workforce development.
- **Champion ARTS8 Collaboration**
Continue to collaborate with ARTS8 organisations through the annual ARTS8 collaboration, this year being hosted at NAISDA, and shared initiatives that build knowledge exchange and cooperation to strengthen excellence and access in national arts training.



- **Empower Regional and Hyperlocal Content Makers**
Expand our Flexible Delivery Framework to support students and content makers from remote and regional communities, ensuring equitable access to training and resources.
- **Develop a Remote Learning Strategy**
Continue building a comprehensive approach to remote learning that enables all Australians to access AFTRS' world-class screen and broadcast education.
- **Support Major Government Initiatives**
Collaborate with industry to deliver training aligned with Government initiatives, including workforce capacity building under the Location Offset.
- **Strengthen Asia-Pacific Engagement**
Develop our engagement in the Asia Pacific Region to foster partnerships and knowledge exchange.
- **Maintain High Standards of Governance**
Uphold the highest standards of governance, probity and integrity, ensuring transparency and accountability in line with the PGPA Act.

We will continue to work closely and cooperatively with your Department and portfolio agencies, while respecting the independence of the AFTRS' Council in its decision-making.

We look forward to delivering on these priorities and contributing meaningfully to Australia's cultural life and creative future.

Yours sincerely,



RACHEL PERKINS
Chair



AFTRS

Australian Film Television
and Radio School

AFTRS 2025-26 STATEMENT OF INTENT

The role of AFTRS

As the national screen and audio school, AFTRS provides world-leading education, training, and research to Australians, so that Australian culture and stories thrive locally and around the world. The School's founding in 1973, by a bipartisan Act of Parliament, recognised the critical role of formal education and training in creating a thriving Australian industry of highly skilled practitioners.

National Cultural Policy - *Revive*: a place for every story, a story for every place

During this period, AFTRS looks forward to proudly maintaining its commitment to *Revive* and to contributing to the development of the next iteration of this vital national work. AFTRS shares *Revive's* dedication to First Nations First and the significance of accessibility for creative talent throughout Australia to ensure that there is, indeed, a story for every place and a place for every story. We fully support the policy's emphasis on the growth of a resilient, flourishing cultural life in Australia and the role national arts training organisations play in building strong cultural infrastructure. AFTRS recognises artists as essential workers who create art, performances, music, films, and stories that resonate throughout all aspects of Australian creative life and we are committed to working with industry to ensure it is supported with skilled creative creators who can engage with audiences within Australia and around the world.

AFTRS CORPORATE STRATEGY: Creating the Future

FY2025 to 2026 marks the final year of AFTRS's corporate strategy, **Creating the Future**. Its three pillars of national reach, excellence, and sustainability reflect the ethos and ambition of *Revive's* five pillars. Together, they have guided AFTRS' priorities during a time of significant shift for Australia's screen and audio industries, ensuring the continued delivery of transformational, globally leading creative learning accessible to learners across Australia. As AFTRS embarks on the design of its new corporate strategy, it will continue to build on these successes, specifically around access and equity, whilst refocussing resources on industry alignment and innovation. We will also remain guided by the principles of *Revive* and its commitment to growing the rich cultural life of this country.

NATIONAL REACH: First Nations first / a place for every story

AFTRS' National Reach pillar ensures that all Australians—wherever they live—can access world-leading screen and audio training, supporting *Revive's* commitment to a fair, representative and culturally vibrant creative nation.

First Nations First

AFTRS will continue to centre First Nations values, and knowledges across all areas of School activity. Thanks to the Government's \$530,000 **First Nations Bridging Program** grant, supported through the National Cultural Policy, AFTRS is nearing completion of two major initiatives. The **On Country Pathways Program (OCP)** was designed to build career pathways for First Nations creative talent in remote, rural



Australian Government

AFTRS

and regional communities. Over 70 First Nations creatives, representing over 50 nations, have received tailored screen and audio training grounded in place, culture and community in Gimuy / Cairns, Bidyadanga Community (remote Western Australia) and Jigamy (regional NSW). In January 2026, OCPP will culminate in Gadigal Week, bringing First Nations participants and facilitators from across the country to AFTRS' world-class Sydney campus to extend their training and strengthen networks and pathways into the screen and audio industries.

The grant has also enabled AFTRS to conduct a detailed **First Nations Skills Audit**, identifying gaps and opportunities for greater First Nations participation in the screen sector. This Skills Audit has engaged with over 50 First Nations practitioners through targeted surveys and interviews. The next phase is to complete an action plan with the input of First Nations teams from the federal and state screen agencies. Recognising that relocation costs remain one of the greatest barriers for First Nations students entering formal study at AFTRS, Council and Executive have prioritised subsidised accommodation for First Nations students close to AFTRS campus. AFTRS is extremely appreciative of the additional \$500,000 grant to support accommodation for First Nations and financially disadvantaged students through to FY2027–28, which is allowing us to pursue an accommodation partnership with the NSW Aboriginal Land Council.

Access and National Reach

AFTRS' commitment to access is at the heart of National Reach. Through the **Flexible Delivery Framework**, AFTRS courses are increasingly flexible, multimodal and available to learners anywhere in Australia—ensuring parity of experience for students who either can't or choose not to relocate to Sydney. This Framework is a core driver of the School's new **Award Course Plan**, ensuring AFTRS Award Courses are fit-for-purpose for the new strategy and the next iteration of *Revive*.

Creating multiple entry points into training remains a priority. This year, AFTRS will pilot micro-credentials, offering learners training that can stand alone or act as a stepping stone into an Award Course. Across all four award courses, 25% of offers for 2025 were made to students entering via a VET qualification. This year AFTRS expanded its successful partnership with TAFE NSW to Canberra, partnering with the Canberra Institute of Technology to enable eligible graduates of the Diploma of Screen & Media to enter directly into Year 2 of the Bachelor of Arts Screen: Production (BA).

The BA program was designed in close consultation with industry, producing graduates who are multi-skilled, adaptable and job-ready; more than 85% of BA graduates secure industry roles within six months of completion. This is facilitated by student internships and paid placements for our graduates, thanks to a range of industry partners – from BBC Studios in Sydney to WildBear Entertainment in Canberra, which we will strive to widen further.

Traineeships and internships remain critical pathways into industry, and AFTRS is committed to ensuring regional and remote students have equitable access to these opportunities. Through remote learning and locally delivered placements—such as those in regional ABC stations—programs like the Graduate Diploma in Radio and Podcasting are enabling students outside major cities to gain industry experience and meet the growing demand for regional content makers.

AFTRS has also expanded its national short course partnerships, adding new collaborations with Griffith Film School, alongside existing in-person course delivery with Edith Cowan University (Perth), RMIT (Melbourne), Apple Box Studios (Hobart), Mercury CX (Adelaide) and Screenworks (regional Australia). These partnerships extend AFTRS' reach into local ecosystems, ensuring learners nationwide can access high-quality skills development with face-to-face, hands-on learning.



For students who must relocate to Sydney, AFTRS is building its scholarship capacity, prioritising support for living expenses in one of the world's most expensive rental cities, as well as scoping longer term accommodation options in partnership with NIDA and National Art School (NAS).

Accessibility for members of the Disabled and d/Deaf Communities remains a priority. Implementation of the AFTRS Disability Action Plan 2024–2027 has commenced, strengthening accessible practice across productions, training environments and student support systems. New adjustment factors at application stage, targeted scholarships, and recruitment initiatives for under-represented communities mean AFTRS is on continuing to build increasingly diverse cohorts that represent all Australia.

EXCELLENCE: Centrality of the artist / engaging the audience

For over 50 years, AFTRS has delivered a unique hands-on model of education that embraces artistry and creative excellence, grounded in skills of collaboration, problem solving and industry literacy. Our studios, audio labs and LED volume provide industry-simulated environments where students learn alongside active industry practitioners, ensuring the technical proficiency, creative courage and audience-focused storytelling that *Revive* identifies as essential to Australia's cultural future. This sustained focus on craft and creativity has produced generations of AFTRS alumni whose work has shaped Australian screen, audio and broadcast culture, creating some of the nation's most recognisable IP and contributing to Australia's reputation as a global centre of excellence.

Industry Training

The scale and pace of growth in the national screen and audio industries continues to accelerate: Screen Australia's drama report recorded \$2.7 billion in drama expenditure in 2024/25, a 43% year-on-year increase, driven by increasing international production activity, while Australian titles contributed \$1.1 billion, up 14% from the previous year. While this is good news, we need to ensure a coordinated approach to training and workforce development to meet this growth. AFTRS' Industry Skills Framework is enabling the School to identify, prioritise and address workforce gaps nationally. This work focuses on below-the-line roles experiencing persistent shortage—including production accountants, assistant directors and location managers—and is being delivered in close collaboration with studios, guilds and state and territory screen agencies. An example of this is the **Crew Development Program** in New South Wales, delivered with Screen NSW, TAFE NSW and NIDA and funded by Create NSW. Through this partnership, learners from under-represented groups access intensive training at either AFTRS, NIDA or TAFE, that is targeting crucial entry-level and mid-career roles. The training is supported by paid internships and long-term mentorships.

AFTRS is taking a leadership role in developing a unified National Training Framework, informed by Screen Australia's Production Infrastructure and Capacity Analysis. Working with Screen Australia, the Office for the Arts, NIDA and the state and territory screen agencies, we are seeking a coordinated approach to mapping training needs, aligning training methods and resourcing delivery to come up with a sector-wide framework for gold-standard workforce training pathways and upskilling.

AFTRS Award Courses

Central to AFTRS' commitment to excellence is the Award Course Plan (FY25–27), a major strategic initiative reshaping the School's award course ecosystem to ensure programs remain industry-aligned, accessible and sustainable. Building on the Remote Learning Strategy, AFTRS is developing a whole-of-School Student Success Framework to strengthen academic progression and support; embed inclusive pedagogy across all disciplines; streamline and clarify pathways between award levels; and use



data-driven insights to enhance retention, belonging and student outcomes. This framework will underpin the Award Course Plan, to ensure a consistent best-practice approach across all programs.

Research & Innovation

Supporting *Revive's* call for a future-focused, adaptive sector, growing AFTRS' research capacity remains central to its Excellence pillar. The School's flagship research initiative, the **Digital Futures Summit (DFS)**, has become a nationally significant forum for policy, practice and innovation. The **2025 Summit—Anticipation: Imagining the Screen and Audio Industry in 2030**—convened international and Australian leaders, educators and policymakers – including Doug Shapiro, Emil Sherman and Lynette Wallworth a five-session program attended by 1,538 attendees exploring AI, automation, interactivity, labour futures, creative equity and global market shifts.

Striving to solve industry problems is core to AFTRS' applied research. Projects this year include a **2030 Producers Skillset Project** that will offer both forums for discussion and new curricula to support Australian producers to adapt a fast-changing industrial and technological landscape, as well as new curriculum to teach leadership skills and the knowledge to attract private investment.

Research and innovation remain embedded into AFTRS award courses. This year's **Artist-in-Residence, Mia Wasikowska**, has been a generous and inspiring contributor to our school community – bringing her first-hand experience of artistry and creativity with some of the world's leading filmmakers to our students. Our production-based MA research projects encourage experimentation, critical reflection and the development of new creative and technical forms. Students in the BA and MA programs examine emerging storytelling modes including interactivity, VR/AR, and games-based world-building; BA Screenwriting cohorts prototype interactive narratives and draft game scripts as part of their coursework; while MA Screen Production students utilise AFTRS' LED volume and virtual production facilities as part of classwork collaborations and for their capstone productions.

As well as engaging with the **LED Volume Strategy**, AFTRS will continue to expand technical training in emerging technologies for both students and professionals, supporting national capacity in fast-growing production methodologies.

AI

AFTRS recognises that artificial intelligence is reshaping creative practice, production processes and audience engagement across the global screen and audio sectors. Guided by our mission to prepare graduates who can shape and inform the future of storytelling, the School is taking a leadership role in building an informed, ethical and critically engaged approach to AI. Students and staff are supported to experiment with AI as a creative and technical tool with discernment, while developing a clear understanding of its limits, risks and ethical considerations, including copyright, ICIP, cultural safety, authorship and the responsible use of datasets. The School has introduced internal guidelines for AI use in teaching, assessment, marketing and research, and continues to evolve these as industry and policy settings shift. Through curriculum design, research activity, and national thought initiatives like AFTRS Digital Futures Summit, AFTRS aim is to support our school community and the wider industry to use AI in a way that enhances—not replace—human imagination, originality and cultural expression.

The School's approach to excellence is grounded in strengthening the full creative ecosystem—from early talent through to mid-career practitioners—with a focus on artistry, audience engagement and collaboration. AFTRS' curriculum and industry programs ensure that graduates understand audience behaviours, changing distribution landscapes, platform dynamics and the cultural responsibility of national storytelling. Through partnerships with Screen Australia, ABC, SBS, industry guilds and the Arts8



institutions, AFTRS will contribute to shaping the future of Australian creative education and training, and ensure that Australia continues to produce powerful storytelling that resonates on the global stage.

SUSTAINABILITY: Strong cultural infrastructure

AFTRS' Sustainability pillar guides the School in meeting its responsibility to steward our resources in a way that is resilient, future-focused and aligned with the priorities of our strategy and *Revive*. The School remains grateful for the additional \$23.2 million in Government appropriation over four years, noting that the FY2024-25 - FY2027-28 figure has reduced by \$2.0m following WOAG budgetary measures. This investment has stabilised workforce and operational pressures, allowing AFTRS to safeguard core teaching capability, strengthen organisational resilience, and continue upgrading its facilities and systems so the School can support Australian creatives well into the future.

The School remains committed to and excited by working closely with our Arts8 colleagues, tackling common challenges, sharing resources and knowledge, and contributing to excellence in creative education. AFTRS is working with NIDA to find shared approaches to infrastructure and technology opportunities and challenges.

As part of our infrastructure renewal agenda, AFTRS is progressing a **Building Audit** to inform a comprehensive, multi-year facilities plan. This work will assess critical building systems, accessibility, sustainability, performance, learning environments, and production-relevant spaces across the School. Several studios and facilities—radio and podcasting studios, film stages, mix theatre, editing suites, camera inventory and lighting systems—have reached end-of-life or lost industry currency, and renewing this equipment is essential to ensuring students remain job-ready and industry-competitive, particularly within virtual production, audio innovation, and cinematography. In parallel, AFTRS is progressing a Production Strategy that will ensure our production workflows and approaches align with contemporary industry practice and platforms, including changes in virtual production, HDR workflows and multi-platform delivery. This strategy will draw from industry consultation occurring through the Industry Skill Framework, ensuring AFTRS' infrastructure continues to model best-practice production standards for students and industry partners.

Alongside physical infrastructure renewal, AFTRS has begun a multi-stage upgrading of its digital systems ecosystem, including implementation of Salesforce CRM (Education Cloud and Marketing Cloud). This will transform AFTRS' capability to manage student learning journeys and make evidence-informed decisions that grow and diversify student cohorts. It is also critical to strengthening AFTRS' own-source revenue, enabling better donor, alumni and partnership management, more efficient admissions workflows, and clearer insights for philanthropic targeting.

To diversify and grow revenue beyond Government funding, AFTRS has established a **Fundraising Working Group** supported by key alumni and Council members and is progressing the establishment of an **AFTRS Foundation**. This work builds on the success of the Alumni & Industry Scholarship Fund and aims to significantly expand AFTRS' scholarships. The Foundation will play a key role in securing long-term financial resources that will allow us to grow our support for students who face structural barriers to participation to study at AFTRS—including First Nations students, students with disability, students from regional and remote areas, and those from culturally and racially marginalised backgrounds.

Environmental sustainability forms the third dimension of AFTRS' long-term sustainability agenda. The School is implementing a **new Environmental Sustainability Strategic Plan (ESSP)** to ensure compliance



with APS Net Zero 2030 requirements and position AFTRS as a sector leader in environmentally responsible screen production. This includes improved data capture and reporting, procurement aligned with sustainable production practices, and integration of environmental literacy into teaching and production workflows. AFTRS will continue its active membership in Sustainable Screens Australia, contributing to access, toolkits and training that help industry measure and reduce production carbon impacts. In shaping the ESSP, AFTRS remains guided by First Nations values—particularly wise practice, deep listening, custodianship and reciprocity—principles enshrined in the AFTRS First Nations Strategic Plan.

Taken together, these initiatives ensure AFTRS remains a resilient, future-ready institution capable of delivering national benefit: modern infrastructure, fit-for-purpose systems, strong partnerships, diversified resources, and culturally grounded, environmentally responsible practice. Through this sustained focus on organisational excellence, AFTRS continues to strengthen Australia’s creative training infrastructure and deliver the strong cultural foundations envisioned by *Revive*.

Conclusion

Storytelling connects us to our culture and to one another. It enables Australians to make sense of a changing world and our place within it. AFTRS proudly embraces the vision of *Revive*—to foster a vibrant cultural life supported by skilled, bold and purposeful storytellers—and the School is committed to training the creative practitioners who will shape this future.

We welcome further engagement with the Office for the Arts on opportunities and challenges within the sector, and we look forward to working together to meet the objectives for 2025–26 and beyond.

