



MEDIA STATEMENT

19 May 2017

FTI to consolidate with Screenwest

The Film & Television Institute WA (FTI) and Screenwest today announced the proposed consolidation of FTI into Screenwest, with Screenwest taking on responsibility for supporting the emerging screen sector.

Mitchell Wells, FTI Chair, said the not-for-profit organisation was faced with an uncertain future funding environment and that the move would provide surety to emerging filmmakers.

The Department of Culture and the Arts (DCA) will support FTI to wind down the organisation and transition the core screen programs to Screenwest. Screenwest is committed to ensuring FTI's historical annual funding allocation will continue to support the emerging screen sector into the future.

"FTI's role in supporting independent and emerging screen sector practitioners over the past 45 years cannot be questioned", Mr Wells said. "We broke new ground in bringing screen culture to the community, providing access to tools and knowledge needed by screen practitioners, bringing a sense of community to the sector, celebrating the achievements and excellence of our best and brightest through the WASAs, or just being there to give guidance on projects and careers.

"In the eighties, access to our edit suites gave local filmmakers the only option to make broadcast quality productions when they didn't have access to commercial facilities. In the nineties, the Lumiere Cinemas established the market in Perth for arthouse cinema bringing a whole new aesthetic to film-lovers in our city. The Digital Art Studio, launched in the late 90s, anticipated the convergence of broadcast and streaming and laid the groundwork for FTI's animation centre of the 2000s.

FTI's focus on training through the 2000s provided the platform that many of the current crop of amazing young filmmakers launched their careers from. More recently, we have embraced the notion that games, interactive, and film have much to gain from being brought closer together creatively and at the same time started to open up the philanthropy sector as a legitimate source of funding for screen projects.

"Our production arm Excalibur Productions offered an alternative option essential to the early careers of many of Perth's established industry members, and more recently facilitated the first broadcast credits for many Aboriginal filmmakers in the Deadly Yarns series. Many of Excalibur's productions have and continue to be seen right around the world.

"These things are just a snapshot of the contribution that FTI has made over a long time, and it is of course with a tinge of sadness that we make this announcement today. This move is not made lightly, and we examined closely our various options.

With the future funding environment in mind, it is clear that consolidating with Screenwest is the best way forward to ensure services to the emerging filmmaking sector continue to be delivered.

“I would like to acknowledge the FTI Board and staff and thank them for their professionalism in what has been a tough few years.”

Janelle Marr, Screenwest Chair moved to reassure emerging filmmakers that they would be consulted and supported with programs specific to their needs.

“Screenwest funded FTI to run programs supporting emerging and early career filmmakers. Moving forward, Screenwest is committed to these funds continuing to go towards this sector in an effective, efficient and strategic manner. During the next six months we will consult with the emerging screen sector to ensure this occurs,” Mrs Marr said.

“Screenwest will provide a range of early career programs including short film initiatives; mentorships, coaching and advice; and skills development short courses. These programs are essential to developing a strong, viable and evolving local screen sector.

“Short films are pivotal in discovering emerging talent and allowing filmmakers to learn their craft through practical experience. We will work with FTI to make sure there’s no gap in the delivery of these programs.

“Shooting of the 100th Indigenous Community Story is due to be completed by the end of June 2017. Screenwest will work with FTI and the program’s other partners, stakeholders and storyowners to ensure accessible, long-term archiving of these culturally valuable stories.

“Other events, activities and programs currently supported by FTI that sit outside of the remit of Screenwest funding will be reviewed with the FTI Board.”

Duncan Ord, Director General, Department of Culture and the Arts, commended the organisations for their collaborative approach in reaching this important decision.

“While this is a difficult time for FTI’s members, the consolidation is in line with the Government’s strategy to ensure public monies are being expended on program delivery and not overhead costs,” Mr Ord said.

“What is being proposed will provide considerable administrative efficiencies which will enable more money to be spent on grass roots programs for emerging screen practitioners.”

ENDS

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