

Election 2019: the main parties in their own words

In the lead up to the 2019 election, **Make It Australian** wrote to the three main parties – Liberal, Labor and Greens – to seek their responses to specific questions about their support for the screen industry. We are reproducing their answers in full below to help you decide how to vote on May 18.



Do you support SVOD services operating in Australia having ongoing requirements to invest in and promote original Australian content?

Labor believes that all content services in the business of providing Australians with professional content, that meet certain scale and service criteria, should be contributing to the health and sustainability of our screen content sector by providing Australian content. This includes SVOD services. The precise requirements should be developed based on evidence and public consultation as part of the process under Labor's Taskforce.

The SVOD market is still an emerging market in Australia. As part of their initial entry into the Australian market, SVOD services have acquired Australian back catalogue content and made various co-production deals to invest in new Australian programming. Any regulatory obligations placed on SVOD services must balance the viewing choices of Australian audiences with the SVOD industry's continued growth and sustainability in Australia. This is an area that will be kept under review.

The Morrison Government provides significant support to the Australian screen industry recognising the important role it plays in shaping our national identity. A viable domestic screen production sector is essential for audiences to have access to quality Australian content. The government recognises this through investment in the industry using a range of mechanisms, including tax rebates, direct funding and regulatory measures, designed to support the production of Australian content and promote the development of a sustainable production sector.

The Government's support mechanisms all combine to assist the Australian industry to create unique film, TV and online content that is extremely popular with audiences here and abroad. 2017-18 saw expenditure of \$718 million on local productions, including feature films, television and online content, a record breaking year for expenditure on Australian projects.

The Greens have worked hard to protect and support Australian content. Senator Sarah Hanson-Young recently chaired the Senate inquiry into Australian content on broadcast, radio and streaming services. As part of this report The Australian Greens recommended that the Australian Government implement at least a 10 per cent expenditure, and a separate promotion, obligation on SVOD services operating in Australia.

Do you support maintaining children's content obligations for commercial free-to-air TV?

Labor believes that a diversity of services should provide a diversity of Australian content, including children's content on commercial free-to-air TV. These requirements should be examined as part of the evidence-based and consultative process under Labor's Taskforce.

Content obligations require that minimum levels of children's content are made available on broadcasting services. The Children's Television Standards 2009 sets minimum quotas for certain format genres, including 'P' (preschool) and 'C' (children's) programs. Any changes in this area would need to be made carefully and with industry consensus.

The Australian Greens strongly reject calls to reduce current content obligations. Children's television contributes to the cognitive, emotional and creative development of children and young people. It is crucial that Australian children grow up with a strong sense of identity that reflects our culture and values.

Do you support maintaining the Australian content requirements for commercial free-to-air TV and/or subscription TV, including for adult drama and documentary programs?

Labor believes that a diversity of services should provide a diversity of Australian content, including adult drama and documentary programs and including for commercial free-to-air and/or subscription TV. These requirements should be examined as part of the evidence-based and consultative process under Labor's Taskforce.

One of the objectives of the *Broadcasting Services Act* is to promote the role of broadcasting services in developing and reflecting a sense of Australian identity, character, and cultural diversity. This role is promoted via programming quotas requiring minimum amount of content produced under the creative control of Australians to be broadcast. Any changes in this area would need to be made carefully and with industry consensus.

As mentioned above, the Australian Greens are strong supporters of Australian content and support the maintenance of current Australian content obligations for all broadcasters.

Do you support Australia maintaining or having greater tax incentives for both film and television to ensure that the Australian screen industry remains internationally competitive?

Labor is of the view that these settings need to be examined as part of the evidence-based and consultative process under Labor's Taskforce.

Labor has a long-term commitment to a well-supported and funded Australian film and television industry. We know that government support for the Australian film and television industry encourages increased investment, trains further talent and assists market development as well as creating stories that Australians love to watch.

Labor understands the role that competitive incentives play, for example in demonstrating Australia's position as a world-class filming and production destination and that encouraging large-scale film and TV production to locate to Australia results in jobs for Australia's creative talent including technicians. We know that providing great economic, employment and skill development opportunities is important to sustainable high skill jobs development in this rapidly growing area of the global economy.

The largest screen production companies in the world are choosing Australia due to the Morrison Government's \$140 million location incentive and decision to give access to the PDV Offset and Location Offset to series solely distributed through online services.

Australian crew and creatives are recognised as world class and are highly sought after for high profile, big budget productions around the globe. Now, thanks to the Morrison Government, there are more opportunities at home for them to showcase their skills and build sustainable businesses.

The Producer Offset, coupled with direct investment from Screen Australia and the Australian Children's Television Foundation and supported by investment in the next generation at AFTRS and NIDA, is delivering quality content. The Morrison Government's focus is on building a robust screen sector as the best basis for vibrant Australian stories to continue to be told.

As part of our recommendations in the Senate inquiry into Australian content on broadcast, radio and streaming services we recommended that the Australian Government:

- introduce a single Producer Offset of 40 per cent for all types of qualifying production, including both film and television – this Producer Offset should only be available to production companies that do not also hold a broadcasting licence, to ensure the future of Australia's independent production sector;
- remove the 65 hour cap on television series from accessing the Producer Offset; and
- increase the Location Offset to 30 per cent.

Do you pledge to reverse the indexation freeze to the ABC's funding of \$83.7 million?

On the eve of the 2013 election the Liberals promised there would be “no cuts to the ABC”. That was a lie.

Labor acknowledges the central importance of properly funded public broadcasters in contributing to the screen ecosystem, and will reverse the indexation freeze, which amounts to a cut in real terms.

The ABC is Australia's largest creative employer and by far the nation's leading broadcaster in supporting home-grown stories and boosting the Australian screen industry, including independent producers.

A Shorten Labor Government will:

- Reverse Scott Morrison's unfair \$83.7 million cut to the ABC.
- Guarantee stable funding for the ABC over its three year budget cycle.
- Provide \$2 million to the ABC to restore shortwave radio in the Northern Territory.
- Provide \$10 million to the ABC to support regional broadcasting, more local and regional content, emergency broadcasting and regional jobs.
- Provide \$3 million to the ABC for a News Literacy Program to help young Australians discern real news from disinformation.

Labor has defended the ABC against the Liberals' cuts and attacks to its independence because we are committed to a comprehensive and independent public broadcaster, free from political interference and commercial influence. Labor will never privatise the ABC.

There is a clear choice in this election between Labor, who stands for a strong and independent ABC, or the Liberals who have shown they will attack and cut the ABC at every opportunity.

The Morrison Government's investment in the ABC is an important underpinning of media diversity and also a significant Commonwealth contribution to civic journalism in Australia.

Over the next three years, the ABC will receive \$3.2 billion – more than \$1 billion per annum – which includes an additional \$43.7 million to continue the enhanced news measures, supporting local news and current affairs.

It is important to recognise that in a rapidly changing media environment, the ABC has more funding certainty than other media organisations in the nation.

See answer to next question.

Do you support restoring the ABC's and SBS's base funding to pre-2014 levels?

To support Australian screen content, Labor will provide \$40 million to the ABC for Australian content across scripted drama, comedy, children's and music and \$20 million to SBS for Australian content, increasing the percentage of Australian content on the SBS main channel.

Labor will also reverse the Liberals' \$83.7 million unfair cut to the ABC, as well as guarantee funding certainty over the next ABC budget cycle.

In addition, Labor will provide \$15 million to the ABC to:

- Bolster regional news and emergency broadcasting.
- Help restore shortwave radio in the Northern Territory.
- Support a news literacy program to fight disinformation and fake news.

In addition, Labor will provide \$4 million to the ABC and SBS to upgrade systems to provide audio description for blind and low vision Australians.

Labor will ensure the national broadcasters are properly funded. We will keep the ban on ABC advertising and sponsorship in place and not extend the current advertising levels on SBS.

The Morrison Government is providing more than \$4 billion to the national broadcasters over the next three years to keep delivering their highly-valued services to the community.

Over the next three years, the ABC will receive in excess of \$1 billion per annum, while SBS will receive around \$300 million per annum. The Government's investment in the national broadcasters is an important underpinning of media diversity and also a significant contribution to civic journalism in Australia.

The ABC has been cut by more than 1000 jobs and more than \$300 million since Tony Abbott went to the 2013 election promising no cuts to the ABC.

The Greens would restore every dollar cut from the ABC's budget by the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison Government since 2013, and grow the ABC's funding year-on-year to account for those years of chronic underfunding. This represents an investment of \$320 million through to 2021-22, and \$1.227 billion over the decade.

We also believe that funding for the ABC should be done by hard law not handshakes. We would amend the ABC Act to create a standing appropriation-making funding of the ABC law, not subject to the whim of the government of the day. This would help recover the jobs lost and restore and protect the news-breaking ability of our nation's public media across the country.

Do you support restoring Screen Australia's annual funding to pre-2013 levels (ie. \$100 million per annum)?

Labor will work with Screen Australia to ensure it is properly funded going forward.

The policy and regulatory framework for Australian and Children's Screen Content will be examined in an evidence-based and consultative manner in the process under Labor's Taskforce.

The Morrison Government's commitment to Budget repair is delivering the first surplus in more than a decade. Like most other portfolios, the Arts portfolio has provided a contribution to Budget repair, but significant efforts were made to keep those reductions as small as possible. Screen Australia is still receiving significant funding from the Government every year.

We have long supported the work of Screen Australia and, in addition to restoring funding so it can continue its important work, the Greens recognise that grassroots content creation needs access to support and funding. Local content creates jobs and sustains creative industries in Australia.

The Greens would establish a Content Creator Fund to set aside a grant fund of \$50 million each year for the production of local content. This fund would help support high-quality local content, our creative industry and, importantly, allow Australians to keep telling their own stories. As part of the Greens' commitment to First Nations media, \$2 million of that fund would be available exclusively for First Nations content creation.



Make it Australian is a joint campaign between the Australian Directors Guild, the Australian Writers' Guild, the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, and Screen Producers Australia.

Find out more at makeitaustralian.com