



AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S
TELEVISION FOUNDATION

Corporate Plan

for the period
July 2015 – June 2018

Introduction

The Australian Children's Television Foundation (**ACTF**) is a non-profit company funded by the Commonwealth Government and the governments of all States and Territories of Australia, but excluding Queensland¹.

We are a national children's media production and policy hub and perform a wide range of functions in children's media: as a distributor of and investor in Australian children's television series; as an instigator of new, innovative and entertaining children's media and as a developer of valuable screen resources for the education sector.

Our Mission

We provide Australian children with entertaining media made especially for them, which makes an enduring contribution to their cultural and educational experience.

Our Vision

We will raise the stakes in children's media production, driving higher standards of creativity and innovation, based on the assumption that we should never underestimate children's desire to be informed and challenged as well as entertained.

A note on our Corporate Plan

Our Corporate Plan for the three year period July 2015 – June 2018 has been prepared in consultation with our major funding partner, the Ministry for the Arts.

It outlines our focus and strategy for the period. Our objectives and performance indicators are reconsidered annually during the three year period, and may be amended if considered appropriate.

Although we report on our performance annually, several of our KPIs are measured according to rolling three year periods. Due to the protracted lifespan of television production, reporting across a three year period provides a more accurate snapshot of our ongoing investment that is less subject to annual variation.

¹ The Queensland Education Department withdrew funding of the ACTF from the 2012-2013 financial year, along with funding provided to many other Arts organisations.

Overview of Operating Environment

Government Support

The commitment of successive Australian Governments to supporting locally produced children's television content is critical. Government support is currently provided via a multi-pronged approach:

- direct funding (development and production investment via Screen Australia and the ACTF, and funding for the ABC);
- indirect funding (the producer offset); and
- content quotas (the Australian content quota and Children's Television Standards).

For commercial broadcasters, licensing foreign content is substantially cheaper than producing engaging and high quality Australian content. So there is little commercial incentive to invest in local production. Sustained government intervention has ensured Australian child audiences can access screen stories in their own voices and accents, reflecting the communities in which they live.

In 2013, research jointly conducted by Screen Australia and the ACTF confirmed that Australian children have a strong preference for locally produced children's programming, especially children's live action drama. More recently, in March 2015 the Australian Communications and Media Authority released a report exploring children's viewing habits in respect of broadcast television between 2001 and 2013, *Children's Television Viewing*.

The report shows an overall decline in television audiences, which reflects the increasing adoption of catch-up viewing and online streaming over the period surveyed. However, it also found that audiences of ABC's dedicated children's channels were significantly higher than the commercial channels, clearly demonstrating a preference by children for children's content and the higher quality programming scheduled by the ABC. This was reinforced by the finding that commercial broadcasters recorded higher audiences during periods of block children's programming - children continue to be receptive to programming that caters specifically for them. Importantly, there continues to be strong community support for children's content - 70% of parents of children aged 10-14 considered it important for commercial television broadcasters to continue to show children's programming.

Changes to Operating Environment

- The regulatory environment

The launch of Stan, Presto, and Netflix in quick succession in early 2015 introduced Australians to video-on-demand services to compete with, and augment, the existing array of digital multi-channel free-to-air broadcasting, online catch-up services, and subscription channels. The internet has given audiences unprecedented freedom to source their content, at broadcast quality, at a time and on a device of their choosing. And yet while the amount of content available has expanded dramatically, it has not been accompanied by a proportionate increase in high quality local content. Our biggest concern is that despite the increased content made available, there has been a steady decline in the amount of high quality, locally produced and distinctively Australian children's content getting made, particularly live action drama.

This is the content most valued by child audiences and the community. In a competitive global media environment, it is also the genre that is currently most vulnerable.

This is due to a number of interrelated factors, including:

- Low fees paid for children's content impacts on the programming commissioned by commercial broadcasters. Cheaply made animated series, with international funding aimed at a global market, are being commissioned by commercial broadcasters to fill their C drama quota. As it is produced with Australian involvement it qualifies as 'Australian' content, but the look and feel is international, often with North American accents.
- The ABC is now the only broadcaster regularly commissioning high quality, distinctively Australian live action drama for children. But ABC funding for children's content is discretionary and under continual pressure. While the ABC announced a 40% target for local content on the launch of ABC3 (intended to climb to 50%) this year the ABC is only aiming to achieve 25% Australian content on its kids channels.
- The Children's Television Standards and children's drama sub-quota were established to deliver high quality, locally produced, distinctively Australian children's content on commercial free-to-air television. However, they are no longer the arbiter for quality production that they once were.
- The Producer Offset has inadvertently provided additional assistance to lower budget animation projects which would not have previously qualified for Screen Australia funding. As a result, it has disadvantaged higher quality live action drama production as it makes them harder to get financed.

In the 2015/2016 financial year we will be putting forward a policy proposal aimed at optimising existing government support to address the decline in high quality, distinctively Australia live action drama production.

Reconfiguring the ACTF for a digital future

We are continuing work to reconfigure the ACTF for a digital future and have completed the full digitisation of our back catalogue as well as upgrading our sales portal to enable broadcasters to search, screen programs and communicate with us online.

The next stage is upgrading our online store and redeveloping the education section of our website to allow teachers, educators and schools to purchase direct digital downloads of our titles,

We are also in the process of auditing our social media and communications strategy to ensure we are effectively communicating with our stakeholders, teachers and students and to improve and position our brand.

Objective 1 – Production and Development

Support the development and production of engaging, entertaining, accessible and educative screen content for Australian children.

A successful, vibrant and competitive children’s production industry will result in the creation of better programs for the child audience.

We provide a multifaceted assistance program for producers including: production investment, development funds, professional development, industry networking events and international representation and sales.

We are committed to the development and production of quality children’s content that meets our exacting standards: programming that children, parents and educators can rely on to be engaging, entertaining, accessible, creative and innovative.

1.1 Assist in producing high quality children’s programs

We initiate and facilitate the production of high quality children’s media, identifying opportunities to provide key investment to assist independent producers to produce programs.

Each project we invest in undergoes a thorough qualitative assessment. We consider a project’s originality and its storytelling, the quality of the team behind it, and its potential to engage child audiences. We ensure that they are produced to the highest standard by requiring creative input and regular consultation as a condition of our investment.

Although overall quality is our primary consideration in assessing a project, we take into account several important factors. We:

- encourage diverse stories, voices and faces;
- encourage innovative use of new and emerging media platforms;
- encourage new and emerging producers to enter the industry while at the same time harnessing the skills of experienced producers; and
- identify gaps in content/genre/age groups in children’s television programming.

KPI 1.1 - Provide financial support, nurture and drive the production of children’s projects that meet the exacting standards of the ACTF, to allow those projects to enter into production

Examples of data to be included in ‘Report against Corp Plan’	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- List new projects, progress of projects, description of future projects.- List expenditure on projects (annually, three year average, comparison of performance against previous years).- Reported according to three year rolling period.
--	--

1.2 Providing development investment in high quality concepts

We engage with producers and writers at the earliest stages of development, investing small amounts across a broad range of projects, targeted for their demonstrable quality and their future potential. We actively seek out and identify those projects with the most potential for further production and financing, capable of reaching a wide audience.

KPI 1.2 - Provide seed funding to enable producers to develop high quality concepts for children’s screen content that meets the ACTF’s exacting standards

<i>Examples of data to be included in ‘Report against Corp Plan’</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>List new development projects, partnerships.</i> - <i>List level of funds committed (annually, three year average, comparison of performance against previous years).</i> - <i>Reported according to three year rolling period.</i> - <i>Include any data from acquittal forms.</i>
--	---

1.3 Providing professional development, networking opportunities and facilities

We provide professional development and networking opportunities for experienced and emerging industry practitioners (producers, writers and directors) to realise their potential. Through our development and production investment, we provide invaluable mentoring and guidance to producers. We facilitate networking opportunities for both experienced and emerging practitioners, and we also offer access to our offices and meeting rooms to producers to undertake development activities and workshops. Our professional development initiatives are distinguished by their exclusive focus on children’s television content and represent opportunities not necessarily available to independent practitioners otherwise.

KPI 1.3 - Professional development or networking activities provided assisting producers to realise the full potential of their projects

<i>Examples of data to be included in ‘Report against Corp Plan’</i>	<p><i>List professional development, briefings and networking events conducted by the ACTF.</i></p> <p><i>Provide details of any feedback.</i></p>
--	--

1.4 Enabling Capacity

The assistance we provide to individual producers enables greater capacity within the children’s television production sector.

Through our investments, we advise and guide producers through the development and production process at the earliest stage of a project. By assisting producers to develop strategies for securing finance, negotiating arrangements with broadcasters, and introducing them to potential creative collaborators we empower producers to realise their projects.

This results in producers that are capable, skilled and resourced to bring their projects to production. From an industry wide perspective it increases the overall capacity and capability of the sector. As the federal and state screen agencies do not currently provide development

funding for children’s television projects, our investments are a key entry point for new entrants to the industry.

KPI 1.4 – Enabling Capacity

<i>Examples of data to be included in 'Report against Corp Plan'</i>	<i>Case studies outlining how ACTF’s assistance for producers and investment in projects can enable capacity across the industry</i>
--	--

1.5 Quality of Productions

The number of screenings, audience ratings and sales to international broadcasters of ACTF supported programs represent several measures of our success. Just as important however in measuring quality, are the positive reviews and industry awards that our programs receive.

KPI 1.5 - ACTF supported projects receive critical acclaim and industry awards

<i>Examples of data to be included in 'Report against Corp Plan'</i>	<i>Critical acclaim, reviews, industry awards, ratings.</i>
--	---

1.6 International Market Representation for Australian Children’s Productions

The reach of Australian children’s television is worldwide, with children’s series amongst the most widely exported Australian programs. We have established the ACTF as a respected international brand in children’s television, with our programs watched by children in every continent. International sales of our programs help to build a distinctive ‘Brand Australia’, providing the world’s children with a unique window into Australia.

International sales also represent a valuable source of revenue for producers and investors. They showcase the quality of a production, which assists producers to build their profile and generate interest for the development and production of future programs.

Each year we present the latest ACTF supported projects to international broadcasters at the major international television market, MIPCOM, as well as at MIPTV, MIP Jnr, Asia TV Forum (Singapore) and KidScreen. Our exposure to international markets also gives us invaluable insights into trends in international programming and broadcasting that we apply to our development and investment decisions.

1.6 - International sales of ACTF supported projects

<i>Examples of data to be included in 'Report against Corp Plan'</i>	<i>International sales figures for ACTF projects (annually, three year average).</i>
--	--

Objective 2 – Education

Delivering educational outcomes through the use of media and television for Australian children

We are committed to delivering educational outcomes through the use of media and television for Australian children. We develop contemporary education resources based on ACTF supported projects and make them available on a range of platforms.

We keep abreast of continuing developments in education by maintaining currency with directions in curriculum, teaching and assessment and non-curriculum initiatives relevant to Australian schools.

We build and sustain relationships with professional teacher associations, education/curriculum leaders, and school-based advisors

2.1 Development and production of education resources

We develop high quality education resources based on ACTF supported projects that are available on a range of platforms, including through our online Learning Centre, dedicated subscription websites as well as licensed directly to education departments.

KPI 2.1 - Develop and produce education resources based on ACTF supported projects

<i>Examples of data to be included in 'Report against Corp Plan'</i>	List resources developed by ACTF and where they are available.
--	--

2.2 Quality of Education resources

We measure the quality of the education resources through a range of indicators including reviews and industry awards. In 2014-15 we will commission targeted research to obtain teacher feedback on their use and the value of our educational resources.

KPI 2.2 - ACTF supported projects receive critical acclaim and industry awards

<i>Examples of data to be included in 'Report against Corp Plan'</i>	<i>Critical acclaim, reviews, Industry awards.</i>
--	--

2.3 Engagement with the education community

We engage extensively with the education community through a range of strategies.

We are increasingly connecting with teachers and students across Australia through our:

- webinars - an online network aimed at informing teachers of our resources and sharing knowledge and expertise among teachers, educators and screen industry professionals.
- virtual excursions - connecting students with industry experts and talent, providing students open access to professionals in the production industry.

We present and conduct workshops on educational practices and the adoption of digital interactive media, and participate in conferences and forums relating to educational issues.

KPI 2.3 - Promote ACTF programs, education resources and services to all educators in state and non-state education sectors, universities and aligned cultural institutions

<i>Examples of data to be included in 'Report against Corp Plan'</i>	List engagement with teachers and other members of educational community.
--	---

2.4 Child audience development and content creation

In addition to ensuring better access and distribution of Australian content, we also encourage children to develop their skills as content creators and critical viewers and are engaged with initiatives to develop the child audience's appreciation of locally produced content.

KPI 2.4 – Promote child content creation and audience development

<i>Examples of data to be included in 'Report against Corp Plan'</i>	<i>Media literacy education initiatives. TropJr. . Virtual excursions for students Resources developed for students</i>
--	---

Objective 3 – Access and Distribution

Maximise access for the child audience to new and existing high quality Australian children’s content.

We aim to maximise access to high quality, locally produced, distinctively Australian screen content made for children.

Free-to-air television and Pay TV remain the most significant channels used by children and parents to access content. Nonetheless, we continue to explore emerging online platforms for new opportunities to expand the reach of our content.

We also develop innovative new approaches to engaging with children through educational and learning opportunities.

We encourage discussion and debate about children’s screen content. It is essential that the screen industry, government, and the wider community recognise the challenges facing the continued production of Australian children’s content.

3.1 Access and distribution of ACTF supported programs

We distribute our programs across a broad range of platforms to reach the greatest possible number of children across Australia. In addition to free-to-air broadcast and Pay TV, we distribute our programs on DVD as well as over the internet, providing children with the opportunity to engage with our programs outside of traditionally narrow broadcast windows. We also distribute our programs and aligned education resources extensively through schools as well as through partnerships with public education departments, Catholic and independent school associations.

We are currently redeveloping our website to deliver our content to schools more effectively. This is a major project that will be undertaken over the next 2 years.

KPI 3.1 – Ensure access to ACTF supported programs for children by distributing programs widely

<p><i>Examples of data to be included in ‘Report against Corp Plan’</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - List of FTA and Pay TV screening, DVD sales figures. Online downloads figures, Schools sales figures. - Educational implementation (Clickview, direct schools, etc). - Include comparative performance over three year period
---	--

3.2 Provide expertise on issues concerning Australian children’s television and screen content

We have been an investor, producer and international distributor of children’s television since 1984. Our unmatched experience and insight into the issues affecting children’s media production and distribution in Australia means that we have much to offer in the development of policy that supports children’s access to local screen content in a rapidly changing broadcast and content distribution environment.

KPI 3.2 – We will lead and shape policy directions on issues concerning Australian children’s television and screen content

<p><i>Examples of data to be included in ‘Report against Corp Plan’</i></p>	<p>List policy submissions and achievements.</p>
---	--

3.3 Children’s responses to ACTF Programs

We monitor available ratings data, surveys and audience feedback to gauge children’s responses to programs that we are involved in.

KPI 3.3 - Children respond positively to programs in which the ACTF is involved

<i>Examples of data to be included in 'Report against Corp Plan'</i>	<i>List of ratings for FTA and Pay TV screenings, online streaming and catch-up services. Qualitative feedback from teachers and students..</i>
--	--

Objective 4 – Accountability

Efficiently and effectively manage the ACTF for its stakeholders

The ACTF must:

- (a) maintain appropriate corporate governance protocols; and
- (b) be fully accountable to funding partners;

to ensure that available funds are maximised for projects aimed at the local child audience.

Budget

KPI 4.1 - Annual budget approved by the Finance Sub-Committee and Board and incorporated into the Corporate Plan

Finance Sub-Committee

KPI 4.2 – The Finance Sub-Committee considers all proposed investments above pre-approved levels and reports recommendations to the Board

Audit and Risk Management Committee

KPI 4.3 – The Audit and Risk Management Committee considers all ACTF financial reports directly with external auditor and independently of ACTF management

Meetings

KPI 4.4 – The Finance Sub-Committee and ACTF Board meet at least four times in each 12 month period

KPI 4.5 – The Audit and Risk Management Committee meets at least twice in each 12 month period

Reporting Requirements

KPI 4.6 - Meet all Government reporting requirements on time, and provide prompt responses to any additional Government requests for information