



AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S
TELEVISION FOUNDATION

Corporate Plan

for the period
July 2017 – June 2020

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.

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.

We support and facilitate the provision of high quality, entertaining Australian content for Australian children, 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 2017 – June 2020 has been prepared in consultation with our major funding partner, the Department of Communications and 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.

Government Support and Changes to Operating Environment

For more than 30 years, Australia has led the world in the production of high-quality children's screen content. The ACTF, an organisation that is unique in the world, has played a key role in this success story.

Children's drama is expensive to produce and difficult to monetize. Networks can buy international children's programs for a fraction of the cost of production of local content, and there is therefore no incentive for Australian broadcasters to commission original children's screen content. Successive Australian governments have recognised that the market cannot be relied upon to provide high-quality, original and distinctly Australian drama for children, and have supported production and distribution through a mix of regulation, direct subsidies and tax incentives. This support has been critical and Australian children's content has thrived as a result, benefiting Australian children in many ways.

In recent years, the landscape in which screen content is consumed has undergone significant disruption due to the advent of digital broadcasting and other distribution platforms. This is particularly true for Australian children's content: the advent of the ABC's dedicated children's channel, ABC ME, and block pre-school programming on ABC2, along with the arrival of international on-demand content services such as Netflix, has rapidly transformed the market for the production and transmission of local content.

Australian children's screen content is more vulnerable than ever as a result of several distinct, but interrelated factors, including:

- an outdated regulatory framework and a related significant reduction in investment by the commercial broadcasters;
- a challenging international market where pre-sales and distribution advances, relied upon to finance Australian children's content, are increasingly difficult to achieve;
- the ABC's inconsistent commitment to children's television; and
- the changing viewing habits of Australian children.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the impact of these factors is the risk that Australian children's live action drama could disappear from our screens altogether. Given the continued success of this content with audiences in Australia and around the world, this would be a momentous loss.

The ACTF therefore welcomes the Commonwealth Government's announcement that the Department of Communications and the Arts, Screen Australia and the Australian Communications and Media Authority will undertake a review of Australian and children's screen content to identify support mechanisms to ensure the ongoing availability of Australian and children's content to domestic and international audiences.

The ACTF will engage actively with this review and develop a paper that outlines the case for supporting Australian children's content through a suite of inter-connected policies that ensure the ongoing provision of Australian children's content on public and commercial platforms, underpinned by a platform neutral regulatory framework that is fit for purpose and with the support of direct and in-direct funding.

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.
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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

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

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. The support we provide 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.

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.

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

Examples of data to be included in ‘Report against Corp Plan’	<p>List professional development, briefings and networking events conducted by the ACTF. Provide details of any feedback.</p> <p>Case studies outlining how ACTF’s assistance for producers and investment in projects can enable capacity across the industry, where available.</p>
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1.4 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 1.4 - 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>
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1.5 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.

1.5 - 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>
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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. This includes providing remote and regional schools with opportunities to participate in a range of online events via video-conferencing.

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 the Education section of the ACTF website, and 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.
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2.2 Quality of Education resources

We measure the quality of the education resources through a range of indicators including reviews, usage data, teacher feedback and industry awards.

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>
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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:

- o webinars - an online network aimed at informing teachers of our resources and sharing knowledge and expertise among teachers, educators and screen industry professionals.

- o 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.
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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.</i> <i>Virtual excursions for students</i> <i>Resources developed for students</i>
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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

<i>Examples of data to be included in ‘Report against Corp Plan’</i>	<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
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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 – Lead and shape policy directions on issues concerning Australian children’s television and screen content

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