



**AUSTRALIAN
FILM TELEVISION
AND RADIO SCHOOL**

AFTRS Digital Economy Strategy Submission

Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science's Digital Economy strategy.

AFTRS is Australia's national training, education and research institution for screen and broadcast media. Its purpose is *'To find and empower Australian talent to shape and share their stories with the world by delivering future-focused, industry-relevant education, research and training.'*

AFTRS is ranked among the top 15 film schools internationally, and is recognised for the quality of its teaching and its relevance to industry. In 2017-18 the priorities of AFTRS will be to deliver on the objectives of its corporate plan in the following focus areas:

- Talent development
- Industry training
- Outreach
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Innovation
- Communication

Ideas, creativity and creative skills are central to the success of Australia's digital economy.

Innovation and bold risk-taking, based in strong craft skills and storytelling, will ensure that Australian creative intellectual property succeeds commercially and captures the hearts and minds of local and international audiences. The AFTRS vision is 'To be the reference point for innovation in screen, sound, and story-making, globally.'

Current explorations of the frontiers of technology – including through, for example, virtual reality projects, biometric audience engagement and binaural soundscapes – place AFTRS at the nexus of creativity, technology and innovation.

1. How are advances in digital technology changing the way you work, your industry, and your community?

The screen industries make a hugely significant contribution to the cultural and economic wellbeing of Australians. Screen Australia's Screen Currency report found that, *"In 2014/15 the Australian screen production industry contributed over \$3 billion in value add to the economy and over 25,000 full-time equivalent jobs".*¹ In a landscape of rapidly accelerating change, however, ongoing innovation is required to maintain and build on this value. Digital transformation has been both hugely disruptive and hugely enabling for the screen and broadcast industries.

¹ <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/getmedia/1b1312e5-89ad-4f02-abad-daee601b739/ScreenCurrency-SA-Report.pdf>



**AUSTRALIAN
FILM TELEVISION
AND RADIO SCHOOL**

The traditional forms of the screen industry – Film, TV and Radio – are morphing into new applications, meeting gaming, education, health, virtual worlds and communications in exciting new ways. The boundaries of our industry are expanding now we are starting to engage with new technologies like robotics, AI, and AX, alongside powerful storytelling.

As media players look to new markets and traditional programming gatekeepers are circumvented online and on new platforms, the media landscape has become ever more global. New technologies are enabling collaborations across geographic boundaries.

Working in a global market creates new and exponentially larger levels of competition for audience attention, but it also enables the aggregation of interest communities into audiences of scale. This can create significant opportunities for content outside international blockbusters, for example, issues-based documentary and niche content.² Screen content now flows in a truly global marketplace.

Content creators still need to develop originality of voice, excellence in their craft and powerful storytelling techniques to connect with audiences. They now also need to engage with new technologies in both the creation and distribution of their work and to think about the audience experience in new ways.

Over the last five years, Australia has experienced a revolution away from broadcast schedules towards a world of anytime streaming or downloads and away from physical retail towards podcasting and a world of options in video on demand. Watching content online is now a mainstream experience for most Australians.³

Radio and audio content is experiencing a renaissance via cult podcasts and new storytelling platforms, including models that integrate with new technologies such as location mapping. On smart TVs, laptops, tablets and phones consumers can now access broadcast catch-up (eg *iView*) download-to-rent or -own (eg. *iTunes*) subscription based services (eg. *Netflix*, *Stan*) or advertising supported platforms (eg. *YouTube*). The ubiquity of smart phones also means that all of these services are now highly portable. The days of quality screen content being created primarily to be experienced in a darkened cinema have gone.

² <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/fact-finders/reports-and-key-issues/reports-and-discussion-papers/online-and-on-demand>

³ <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/fact-finders/reports-and-key-issues/reports-and-discussion-papers/online-and-on-demand>





**AUSTRALIAN
FILM TELEVISION
AND RADIO SCHOOL**

However, despite dire predictions, cinema is not dead and Australia continues to have a high per-capita box office spend⁴ and a strong appetite for local content.⁵ Going to the movies is still one of our most popular leisure activities.⁶ Free-to-air TV still dominates our hours-per week of media consumption.⁷ Similarly live, real-time radio is still a major part of most Australians' media diets.⁸

Contemporary audiences are layering new forms of media engagement and content consumption around their existing ones, as their media diets become richer with choice. More interactive modes of experiencing content, such as gaming and virtual reality are becoming much more mainstream. Narrative storytelling is finding new platforms and new ways of connecting with audiences the world over.

AFTRS Industry Innovation Unit explores the boundaries of technology in new forms of storytelling.

In 2016, in partnership with production house Start VR, AFTRS created *VR Noir: A Day Before the Night*, an interactive crime thriller in 360-degree live action cinematography and cutting-edge VR technology combined with computer-generated visual effects. *VR Noir* pioneered storytelling in VR technologies in partnership with innovative companies for the benefit of students, staff and the broader industry.

Showcased at the 2016 Vivid Sydney Festival and the Melbourne International Film Festival, *VR Noir* reached more than 500 participants in the VR experience or through Q&A sessions hosted by the School. *VR Noir* was Runner Up to Google Tilt Brush in the Most Innovative category at the 2016 Virtual Reality Foundation Proto Awards in the USA and a finalist in the 2016 Screen Producers Australia Awards in the Interactive Production category.

The recently launched (Vivid 2017) *Precipice* uses binaural recording technology and unique production methods to provide an immersive narrative soundscape in what is being described as a '3D film for the ears' and the first binaural narrative written specifically for the technology. Developed in partnership with the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, WNYC Public Radio New York and in consultation with BBC's audio research division, *Precipice* has achieved global reach, including being accepted into the Radiodays Europe 2018 program, as a truly original serial podcast.

⁴ [http://www.mpdaa.org.au/customers/mpdaa/mpdaa.nsf/\(PressReleasesByDate\)/23-1-2017/\\$FILE/MEDIA%20RELEASE%20Year%20End%202016.pdf](http://www.mpdaa.org.au/customers/mpdaa/mpdaa.nsf/(PressReleasesByDate)/23-1-2017/$FILE/MEDIA%20RELEASE%20Year%20End%202016.pdf)

⁵ <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/getmedia/1b1312e5-89ad-4f02-abad-daeee601b739/ScreenCurrency-SA-Report.pdf?ext=.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4172.0main+features192014>

⁷ <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/fact-finders/television/audiences/free-to-air-viewing>

⁸ <http://www.commercialradio.com.au/content/mediareleases/2016/2016-02-01-record-numbers-tune-in-to-commercial-ra#.WU-HhjN7FR0>





AUSTRALIAN FILM TELEVISION AND RADIO SCHOOL

AFTRS Industry Innovation has also set up Australia's first *Biometrics Lab for Screen and Broadcast Audience Engagement* in partnership with Screen Audience Research Australia (SARA) and the Danish group iMotions. The Lab is developing methods to identify quantitative patterns in audience engagement – the physiological and emotional responses we display when moved by storytelling – and is feeding these insights back into the industry to assist in content development.

2. What is your vision for an Australia that thrives in a digital economy? Where would you like to see Australia in five, 10 and 20 years' time?

The relevance of digital communications and compelling ways to engage audiences are increasing for every industry – the development of skills in communications and creative practice have never been more relevant.

Good ideas and powerful stories, and the ability to tell them, sell them and make them a reality are the forces that matter in the digital economy. If Australia wants to compete globally, we have to find a way to value and support our creativity.

According to a recent Cisco report, it would take an individual more than 5 million years to watch the amount of video that will cross global IP networks each month in 2021. Every second, a million minutes of video content will cross the network by 2021. Globally, IP video traffic will be 82 percent of all consumer Internet traffic by 2021, up from 73 percent in 2016. Global IP video traffic will grow threefold from 2016 to 2021, a CAGR of 26 percent. Internet video traffic will grow fourfold from 2016 to 2021, a CAGR of 31 percent.⁹

The new creative economy and mediated public sphere require Australians to be empowered with new forms of digital literacy to enable them to participate and thrive, engaging globally and shaping the future of Australia.

The measure of success for screen culture is a high level of engagement amongst audiences, across communities and across generations. AFTRS outreach works to foster a love and appreciation for Australian screen and broadcast culture and builds participation from primary schools up - empowering Australians to tell their stories, wherever they come from and whoever they are.

In 2016-17 AFTRS ran more than 350 programs undertaken by around 5700 students nationally, from aspiring backyard digital storytellers to the highest levels of screen practice.

⁹ Cisco Visual Networking Index: Forecast and Methodology, 2016–2021. Executive Summary: Video Highlights. Updated September 2017.





AUSTRALIAN FILM TELEVISION AND RADIO SCHOOL

These numbers are set to increase in coming years as programs such as the curriculum aligned Media Lab national education modules are rolled out online (see box page 13).

In the emerging digital economy, automation, artificial intelligence and innovations like block chain systems replace traditional services, forms of interaction and contractual exchanges. Creativity, original intellectual property and innovation offer potential for growth for Australian businesses.

Australia has always ‘punched above its weight’ creatively. Working in collaboration with science and technology industries, creative thinking can extend and generate the possibilities of Australian innovation.

3. What is the role of government in achieving that vision?

We need to see greater emphasis on and support for creativity in Government-funded industry development, business support and entrepreneurs programs – we would encourage the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science to open up eligibility and encourage participation from the creative industries.

Government can offer strategic support and partnership to help Australian creative talent, entrepreneurs and businesses to extend their creativity, develop new technology applications and build original Australian IP. Such support would enable Australian creative industries’ businesses to scale up, seek investment to develop marketable and exportable IP and innovations.

AFTRS, as the national federally funded educational, research and training institution, also has a key role to play in developing the capacities of Australian creative talent.

In 2016, AFTRS conducted a skills survey of industry which found that 90% of Australian screen and broadcast industry professionals wanted access to more training opportunities in the future, especially in engaging with new technologies and building sustainable businesses. As a result, AFTRS has developed a greater focus on industry training in the field of creative entrepreneurship. This has led to new training in future-focussed business skills and the development of AFTRS Re: Frame Initiative, a new program focusing on inspiring and training creative leaders for the rapidly evolving screen marketplace.

AFTRS is a thought leader helping preparing our creative industries for the future. In November, AFTRS launched Re: Frame (see box page 9), a training initiative for the media





AUSTRALIAN FILM TELEVISION AND RADIO SCHOOL

industries focused on innovation, sustainability and creative potential. The event brought together creative and technology practitioners who are developing highly original approaches to screen and broadcast practice. The insights (shared in person and online) described new opportunities for content development borne out of technological disruption.

As part of Re: Frame – and central to its role in finding, developing and supporting Australian creative talent – AFTRS is developing skills in creative entrepreneurship via bespoke training.

AFTRS sees great potential and talent emerging in businesses who are operating outside the traditional support structures of funding for screen and broadcast (see, for example, Finch 37 case study on page 7 and company profiles on page 11). These companies would benefit hugely from the ability to access direct support through the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science.

4. What are the key disruptive technologies or business models that you are seeing? What do you predict is on the horizon in five, 10, 20 years' time?

Content streaming and video on demand services have had a transformative impact on distribution, business models and audience expectations. In the era of ubiquitous access to content, success relies on finding a way to rise above the noise amidst endless content libraries. Talent is key in the globally competitive screen and broadcast sectors, where Australian creative product vies for audience attention in a content-saturated world.

New innovation in interactive forms of storytelling, such as virtual reality, augmented reality and mixed reality, as well as integrations of gaming and artificial intelligence are still nascent. These new forms will continue to shape entertainment experiences into the future.

Increasingly, we can anticipate that interactive forms of technology and modes of engagement will start to play an important role in education, health and other applications as parts of people's lives as citizens and consumers. Skills in these forms of development and communication will become fundamental to the capacity for a business to function and reach its potential.

The global nature of contemporary markets and businesses require new levels of sophistication in communications and digital management. As we move into the digital economy, media production skills, creativity and digital literacy will become core skills for participation as citizens, consumers and businesses.



**AUSTRALIAN
FILM TELEVISION
AND RADIO SCHOOL**

5. What communication services, and underlying data, platforms and protocols, does Australia need to maximise the opportunities of the digital economy?

Effective broadband will be essential to maximising the possibilities for businesses, creatives and consumers in the new digital economy.

Beyond internet access, Australia needs to be able to quickly and cost-effectively make products and services available both locally and internationally. In particular in the creative space there are significant opportunities for individuals to directly connect with consumers in ways that have never before been possible.

Platforms to enable Australia to maximise opportunities in the digital economy must be encouraged to grow, with support for disruptive business models.

6. What opportunities do we have to accelerate the development of technologies that will underpin Australia's digital economy?

Some small Australian companies are developing, through their creative process and output, new technologies and applications that have proven to be genuine innovations that are both marketable and exportable.

In 2012 Finch, a Sydney-based advertising, technology and entertainment production company, invented and created 3D-style glasses that allow cinemagoers to watch different versions of the same film, called 37 Degrees. The glasses enable viewers to see a different version of screen content by raising or lowering their heads, in the manner of bifocals.

Developed as part of an ongoing process of experimentation around technology and screens, in a hacker style approach in a basement in Paddington, the glasses have been patented in the US and have proved to be a truly original innovation in the ways people consume and engage with content. Finch's 37 Degrees glasses have been used with short films and in advertising around the world, and their many potential uses, including for subtitling, classification control and creative storytelling, have only just begun to be explored. The support of Austrade's export grants were instrumental to the development of this product.





AUSTRALIAN FILM TELEVISION AND RADIO SCHOOL

These sorts of innovations would grow exponentially with the benefit of Government support in the form of industry development, business support and entrepreneurship funding.

Innovation is hugely benefited and accelerated by opportunities for collaboration, ideas sharing, creative out-of-the-box thinking and partnership that can be facilitated by a central hub such as AFTRS.

AFTRS has built significant partnerships with other Government agencies (including CSIRO's Data 61), creative businesses, technology companies and international partners to create opportunities for technology development and new applications that will continue to reshape and transform the industry and its audiences. As a statutory authority working in the public interest, AFTRS ensures that these developments improve the capacities of the industry and the next generation of storytellers.

The CSIRO Data61-AFTRS Digital Index Project will help position Australia at the forefront of a data-driven future by creating a live entertainment index that will connect commercial enterprise with audience engagement data. A recent feasibility study has paved the way for an open-access interface that will, among other things, provide a live barometer of attitudes towards the entertainment industry. This accessible, interactive, live response geo-mapping and searchable index will help industry better understand how audiences are engaging with content and be commercially prepared to stay ahead of global trends.

7. What opportunities do we have in standards development and regulation to:

- **enable digital entrepreneurship, innovation and trade?**
- **mitigate the risks associated with digital disruption?**

We need to find ways to enable Australian innovation – via start-up funding, talent incubation and structures that encourage risk-taking – and facilitate the development of IP. Innovations and creative applications of technology in the cultural sphere and original Australian creative IP are hugely exploitable and marketable advantages that will have halo benefits for Australia and our economy internationally. Culture is a powerful driver of trade and Australian cultural products establish us as attractive partners and collaborators.

On the flipside of all this possibility are the challenges of globalisation for Australian culture.



AUSTRALIAN FILM TELEVISION AND RADIO SCHOOL

One of the key risks of digital disruption in the creative industries is that Australian creative voices become lost in a highly competitive global marketplace. Regulation has always played a key role in protecting Australian IP and enabling it to compete in a market where economies of scale distinctly advantage cheap-to-purchase international content over expensive-to-produce but culturally relevant local content.

14. What is holding Australian businesses back in terms of benefiting from digital technologies?

In the creative industries, there are generally long periods of development of creative skills, concepts and markets – which can make it difficult to find ways to sustain businesses to create room for innovation. Additionally, many creative businesses lack the capital, or means of accessing it, to scale up around good ideas and marketable innovations. Added to this, is the low ranking of Australians in our ability to commercialise our IP. We are known as great inventors, who are poor at capitalising on these innovations.¹⁰

Via Re: Frame (see box, page 9) AFTRS is seeking to support creative companies to adopt an entrepreneurial and business mindset and have the skills to commercialise their own IP. A current lack of resources to assist companies to explore, realise and scale up their creative visions, and a lack of national reach are holding back the potential of Australian creative companies.

15. What would help Australian businesses to embrace digital technologies?

AFTRS sees education, research and training – alongside strategic funding support – as key in developing the capacities of Australian creative businesses.

The 2016 AFTRS skills survey highlighted the need and appetite for greater training in technologies and creative entrepreneurship, to which AFTRS is responding with a suite of new courses, new thought leadership initiatives (such as Re: Frame) and new partnerships to support industry capacities (such as the Screen business masterclasses, run in conjunction with the Screen Producers Association).

Amidst the deluge of new content, in which platforms and business models compete to filter, tailor and curate content experiences for their users, the quality of content remains

¹⁰ <https://www.ipaustralia.gov.au/sites/g/files/net856/f/intellectual-property-report-2014-low-res.pdf>





AUSTRALIAN FILM TELEVISION AND RADIO SCHOOL

key. In this context, talent, originality and craft skills have never been more important. Skills and training in creative capacities, including in storytelling craft skills, are hugely important.

Australian businesses would benefit from access to resources to assist them to innovate and develop their own IP, rather than focus on fee-for service work, and support in capitalising on their innovations. Support could be provided via an AFTRS Innovation lab/ Incubator that provided access to influential networks and new technologies for experimentation.

16. What efforts are you or your organisation making to respond to digital transformation? Why?

AFTRS has an important role in supporting Australian creative talent at every stage of their careers with skills, capacities and insights that empower them to produce exciting work, including work that engages with new technologies, emergent platforms and new forms of distribution and audience engagement.

AFTRS sees this work as vital in preparing our creative talent and practitioners for the industry of the future as well as the skills, technologies and ways of approaching problems required by the current marketplace.

AFTRS Re: Frame is a training initiative focused on innovation, business building and empowering media professionals and businesses to reach their potential. AFTRS draws on decades-long experience of delivering future- focused, practical and successful screen business programs to lay the foundations of this new series of courses to help practitioners navigate the opportunities borne out of disruption.

Re: Frame courses will facilitate creative practitioners to develop their skills in Innovation, Audience, Creative Leadership, Business models, Brand and Communications. Delivered by industry thought leaders who are actively leveraging new opportunities for growth, Re: Frame courses will be practical, experiential and collaborative, delivered both face-to-face and online. Participants will become more self-aware and learn to harness their creativity and capitalise on potential opportunities.

Re: Frame also includes thought leadership events featuring innovative leaders in technology and creative companies showcasing their work, processes and approaches to extend the possibilities of storytelling via new technologies and innovations.

As a part of the Re: Frame Initiative, AFTRS is scoping an accelerator program to help practitioners to take their careers to the next level. This is likely to be a competitive offering to individuals and companies that have shown initiative and have developed an entrepreneurial business plan but need support and access to technology, creative and corporate networks locally and globally.





AUSTRALIAN FILM TELEVISION AND RADIO SCHOOL

Current programs and courses at AFTRS cover, for example, virtual reality, social video, digital producing, mobile content creation and multi-platform storytelling.

Some of these courses are highly practical, including 'how to' courses on virtual reality ('Intro to VR', covering workflows, gear, shooting and stitching), or filming on handheld devices ('Mobile Content Creation'). Others build strategic capabilities, including rights and monetisation, amplification and measurement on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat ('Social Video Intensive') and design, prototyping, user testing in digital project management ('Digital Producer Skills'). These courses focus the Australian industry on new and future opportunities and skill-up practitioners for creative work on new platforms.

AFTRS ran the first two YouTube Pop Ups in Australia in November 2016 and June 2017. YouTube Pop Up @ AFTRS brought together YouTube Creators and Media Industry Practitioners to push the boundaries of each of their creative practices and learn from each other. It provided media industry professionals a more commercial perspective and audience focused approach to producing content. YouTube creators extended their understanding of production processes and extended their networks for future collaborations. A total of 18 creators with 24,881,502 subscribers (as of Nov 2017) created 31 pieces of content over 9 days.

In 2016 AFTRS collaborated with Screen Queensland to run storytelling workshops to create original scripts for global streaming video-on-demand (SVOD) audiences. Talented local writers, directors and producers pitched their ideas to international SVOD executives and are further developing their treatments for the SVOD platform.

17. What opportunities do we have to use digital technologies to improve linkages into export markets and global supply chains?

Australian creative capacities and IP are hugely exportable. Australia is in early stages of finding ways to export and commercialise its capacities and knowledge in, for example, skills training, innovative approaches and industry standards.

International training partners for AFTRS include the Shanghai Media Group (SMG), for whom AFTRS is now extending its courses in outside broadcasting and interview techniques into more strategic skills development, including on how to develop and maximise IP around format television. The formal Government to Government training program has been in development for several years, and launched officially for the first time in 2017 offering training on creating TV production bibles and improving the quality of existing SMG TV formats. These exchanges not only build capacities across the region and generate new revenue for the School, they build relationships and new levels of mutual understanding that deliver huge, long-term benefits for country-to-country engagement.





**AUSTRALIAN
FILM TELEVISION
AND RADIO SCHOOL**

18. What opportunities do small and medium-sized businesses have to embrace digital innovation to drive customer value, improve their services and unlock their potential?

AFTRS has been working with a range of exciting new small to medium-sized companies – many of which are led by AFTRS graduates – who have embraced new digital platforms and technologies in exciting ways to push the boundaries of Australian creative practice.

Some of the companies and individuals that are collaborating on AFTRS projects and advising in the development of AFTRS strategic direction, innovation programs and courses are:

- **Start VR**, led by AFTRS graduate Nathan Anderson, is a Sydney based company founded in early 2015, that operate as a full service studio who craft immersive VR content. The Start VR team consists of producers, designers, developers and artists who are already building VR/AR applications and experiences. The team is drawn from digital agencies, technology start-ups, film and video production, 3D animation and stereography, web and mobile app development, education and corporate environments. Start VR have in recent years diversified their offer to a wide range of application and generated a wider client base, also taking a thought leadership role in the applications of VR technologies.
- AFTRS graduate Peter Drinkwater at **SARA** (Screen Audience Research Australia) and **House of Brand**. SARA specialises in audience insights for film, TV and new media and how audience behavior is evolving in the new world. SARA and sister agency House of Brand employs 25 staff across Sydney and Melbourne and has conducted a range of industry studies for distributors, exhibitors, funding bodies and producers. SARA also runs audience co-creation as part of the development process and has run research projects with audiences at both script and first cut stages for a number of Australian films and TV programs. One of these current projects is a Biometrics Australian Engagement study, currently providing feedback to projects in production for the ABC. As part of the project, AFTRS has helped establish a Biometrics Lab at the House of Brand where project collaborators will conduct research to test this methodology in new ways. It enables risk-taking, iterative approaches to content development where script versions can be assessed in early and mid-production. The Project's research findings will be embedded in teaching and training at AFTRS and shared with industry for the development of new business models and improved screen production outcomes.
- AFTRS graduate Chloe Rickard at **Jungle** is part of a team that are innovating across traditional forms of television and advertising into script development and production models that have been hugely successful internationally. Their recent series No Activity, developed for Stan, has been remade in the US with Will Ferrell and Adam McKay's production company and CBS and has generated spin offs, such as Squinters, currently in production.
- **Audiocraft**, led by Kate Montague, is working in the pioneering area of podcasting, evolving storytelling skills into different platforms and exploring new business models for supporting creatives, acting as a talent agency, events company and mentoring platform for audio storytellers.





**AUSTRALIAN
FILM TELEVISION
AND RADIO SCHOOL**

The AFTRS Innovation Unit has put forward an idea that is has captured the interest of a team of CSIRO-recommended software developers for partnership in commercial licensing. The production app aims to meet the pre-production, production and post-production needs of new and existing entertainment mediums including stage, screen, audio, XR and other story universe projects. The production app will revolutionize the way teams work, allowing unlimited project members to iterate a three-dimensional artifact, virtually, from anywhere in the world. Such innovations, which line up with the National Innovation and Science Agenda, will benefit the Australian industry and facilitate collaborative engagement with new technologies in dynamic ways.

19. What are the key new growth industries that Australia should be tapping into? In what technologies and sectors should Australian businesses take the lead, and where should we be a 'fast follower' of international trends?

AFTRS sees tremendous growth potential in new platforms, new technologies, new applications of storytelling in the digital economy. Increasingly, creative skills are needed across a significant number of industries to enable innovation, and high-level communications skills are needed to extend the possibility of technologies in finding new engagements with partners, consumers and audiences.

Australia's challenges, including the scale of distance and a relatively low population, means that technology-enabled services in, for example, health and education, will be hugely important and will require significant support in sophisticated communication and digital skills. The need to find cost-effective solutions for these challenges will require Australian companies and service providers to be creative, adaptive and adept at media communications, and to partner and collaborate effectively.

Australia has always 'punched above its weight' creatively. Collaboration between creativity and technology tends to spark new inventions. Opportunities to facilitate and extend on these collaborations will provide significant opportunity for growth.

A recent break-through in creativity research has drawn on neuroscience and cognitive psychology to establish a connection between enhanced creativity and immersive flow states. Findings show that the powerful resource of creativity is relatively untapped due to limitations caused by the noise and distractions of modern life. With industry consultation, AFTRS is developing an interactive creativity-enhancement app to deliver a series of bespoke interactive activities that enable users to custom-design and incorporate a valuable new practice into their daily lives. Game mechanics and token systems will retain user-bonding and provide multiple access levels. Industry-partnership will bring this app into mainstream commercial channels.



**AUSTRALIAN
FILM TELEVISION
AND RADIO SCHOOL**

20. What opportunities do we have to equip Australians with the skills they need for the digital economy, today's jobs, and jobs of the future?

Multiple recent Australian and international reports have highlighted the centrality of creativity and digital literacy in the skills required for future work. These include:

- PWC's 2016 [21st Century Minds Accelerator Program](#) (21CM) which describes the importance of building '21st Century skills' amongst students for the jobs of the future including the ability 'to think smart and creatively, solve problems, persist and take risks, have strong digital skills and know how to collaborate effectively'.¹¹
- Deloitte's 2015 [Tech Trends](#) report, which projects the reliance of future work on creativity, because: "Designing engaging solutions requires creative talent; creativity is also critical in ideation — helping to create a vision of reimagined work, or to develop disruptive technologies deployed via storyboards, user journeys, wire frames, or persona maps".¹²
- Internationally, NESTA's 2017 [The Future of Skills: Employment in 2030](#) report, which found that "Creative, digital, design and engineering occupations have bright outlooks and are strongly complemented by digital technology" and highlighted "the skills that are likely to be in greater demand, including interpersonal skills, higher-order cognitive skills, and systems skills."¹³

International predictive data on work in 2030 released by NESTA a couple of months ago tells us that creative jobs are likely to see a growth rate of 87% by 2030, contrasted with a sharp decline across more traditional industries.¹⁴

We are entering the era of creativity.

Media participation is now central to so many of our forms of work, creative expression, public debate and civic engagement.

Talent and skills development is central to the AFTRS purpose and remit. As well as offering multiple levels of high quality education and training, AFTRS ensures that the training it develops are relevant to industry, including by leading the way around new forms of storytelling.

¹¹ www.pwc.com/au/stem.html

¹² www.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/technology/articles/tech-trends-2015.html

¹³ www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/the_future_of_skills_employment_in_2030_0.pdf

¹⁴ *ibid*





**AUSTRALIAN
FILM TELEVISION
AND RADIO SCHOOL**

The development of these capacities starts young. Media studies can and should play a vital role across the Australian curriculum. We need to build digital literacy and media skills amongst young Australians to empower them for the creative, digital economy – not just for employability, although this is vital – but also for participation as audiences, consumers and citizens.

AFTRS has designed a bespoke initiative to empower primary and secondary school teachers and students to increase their creativity and communication skills through Media Lab, a national initiative available to all schools and their teachers online. Media Lab, delivered in partnership with a range of stakeholders, is designed to be available at scale, to provide a new creative and communication literacy and to be a game changer for education.

Media Lab will provide online curriculum for K-12 that is in step with evolving technological advancements and storytelling trends. The disciplines will include filmmaking, documentary, gaming, virtual reality, podcasting and social and digital media production. Teachers will choose from an expansive range of online workshops and courses, including a pool of supplementary resources.

AFTRS, as the national media school, has extensive experience in providing education for primary and secondary school students via its Schools and Youth Programs which provide short course training for primary and secondary school teachers and students during school holidays. In 2016–17, AFTRS ran 87 schools and youth courses for more than 2,000 students. AFTRS also has the IP and the national relationships to build applicable resources.

21. What opportunities do we have to bridge the ‘digital divide’ and make the most of the benefits that digital technologies present for social inclusion?

AFTRS has been leading the development of a range of industry-wide partnerships to ensure that groups currently underrepresented in screen production are empowered to participate, shape and engage with the creative digital economy.

AFTRS has brought together the Screen Diversity and Inclusion Network (SDIN), a network of broadcasters, screen funding agencies, business associations, guilds and industry-aligned education and training organisations who have committed to work together towards a more inclusive and diverse screen industry. The SDIN seeks to improve the diversity of the talent that shapes Australian content, and the types of stories that are reflected on our screens.





AUSTRALIAN FILM TELEVISION AND RADIO SCHOOL

The SDIN recognises that our storytellers should be drawn from the widest possible talent pool, and the screen industry should draw on a range of backgrounds, influences and experiences in generating Australian screen culture. (see sdin.com.au)

AFTRS, Screen Australia and the state screen agencies this year collaborated on Talent Camp, a national workshop program to provide skills development opportunities for emerging storytellers and screen content creatives from diverse backgrounds across the country.

Responding to audience demand for rich and engaging stories and the industry's concern about the lack of diversity in the Australian screen sector, Talent Camp provides opportunities for new talent, perspectives and voices that reflect the richness and depth of contemporary Australian society.

The Talent Camp workshops have focused on story development, screen producing and career pathways and ran for five consecutive days each in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart, Adelaide, Perth, and Darwin. Twelve to fifteen participants were selected for each state workshop.

AFTRS, along with many of its partners across the screen industries, has recognized that engaging better with contemporary diversity is a significant commercial opportunity as well as a cultural responsibility. Australian audiences are hugely diverse and have significant choice in seeking relevant content in the global media marketplace. Australian productions need to ensure they are relevant to continue to earn their place amongst contemporary audiences' media preferences.

22. What opportunities do we have to ensure digital technology has a positive impact on the cultural practices and social relationships of Australians?

Australian creativity and local storytelling are key to ensuring that digital technologies deliver cultural value to Australians. Well-crafted screen stories are powerful. They connect us emotionally and, via that connection, they communicate ideas, universal stories, and, sometimes, complex social issues. Australian screen content help us to understand ourselves and one another and can develop deeper understandings that lead to empathy and higher levels of engagement.¹⁵

Digital technologies can enable unprecedented forms of social and cultural engagement from a tiny screen that rests in our palms. We are now all participants, one way or another, in media production, even as we tailor our own preferences, respond to content or simply

¹⁵ See, Ipsos Australia, 2013, *Hearts & Minds: How local screen stories capture the hearts & minds of Australians*. <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/getmedia/b2dc80e7-ebb7-4341-9a20-8225b00064bb/Report-hearts-and-minds.pdf>





AUSTRALIAN FILM TELEVISION AND RADIO SCHOOL

shape the market via our personal use data. New forms of digital distribution enable the aggregation of interest communities into audiences of scale.

AFTRS advocates strongly for the development of a new focus on media participation and screen literacy in schools and beyond, and to help build the core capabilities of creativity, innovation and the new forms of communication that will be required for the social and civic participation in the future.

To all of this, creativity is central.

AFTRS wants to see Australian creativity take a leading role in shaping the digital economy of the future.

Conclusion

AFTRS sees tremendous potential in the digital economy, where new technologies empower and enable Australians in all aspects of their lives. It is vital for technology to be coupled with support for creativity to ensure that Australian cultural value and Australian IP build connections and maximise on the possibilities of the digital era. Creative skills, innovative practices and inspiration are central to innovation, and must be fostered and built so that Australians can be ahead of the curve in the new digital landscape.

AFTRS sees exciting potential and inspiring examples of innovation in creative practice already emerging as creativity, commerce and technology merge and benefit us all. Government has a role to play in ensuring that all the structures of new technology are brought to life by creativity and a vibrant culture, many of the forms of which have not yet been imagined.

I look forward to the opportunity of continuing this conversation with you.

NEIL PELOW

AFTRS CEO
30 November 2017