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To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing with regards to the ‘Supporting Australian stories on our screens—options paper’. I come to you as an author (*The Year the Maps Changed*, 2020 Hachette Australia) and a literary agent with Melbourne-boutique agency, Jacinta di Mase Management.

My stance is firmly that this Government needs to keep Australian content quotas in place for commercial broadcasters – deny their push to be relieved of their obligation to telling Australian stories, and do not allow them to use what limited-funding there is on reality-television and light entertainment.

I write to ask that this Government commit to Australian drama and children’s television, by also insisting that subscription video on demand (SVODs) like Netflix etc. likewise meet Australian content quotas and invest in our industry – in our writers, and performers, and especially in our audiences – so they can see themselves and their stories on the screen, and to properly contribute to this section of our Arts economy (an economy that generates \$110-billion annually and employs more people than coal-mining and steelworks combined.)

I take this position as a long-time fan of Australian television; indeed, I wouldn’t be in the industry I am now (that of; books, writing, imagination, and storytelling) were it not for my younger-years spent watching television shows like *Playschool*, *Mr. Squiggle*, and *Bananas in Pajamas*. My tween-to-teen years feeling seen via shows like; *Ship to Shore*, *Heartbreak High*, *Round the Twist*, *The Genie from Down Under* and *Escape from Jupiter/Return to Jupiter*. And now as an adult, having a deep and abiding appreciation for adult dramas like; *The Secret Life Of Us*, *Love My Way*,

Offspring, Rake, Total Control, Redfern Now, Deep Water, Bloom, SeaChange, Mystery Road, Cleverman, and Glitch to name a *very* few. I'm not ashamed to say, I even count award-winning children's program *Bluey* as among the most moving and sophisticated storytelling on Australian television.

It is my belief that should commercial broadcasters succeed in having quotas removed, but still be able to apply for the small pool of available funding (but for lightweight programming and reality-TV shows) – that this would be hugely destructive for Australian culture and storytelling. It would see entire generations of Australians denied the opportunity to engage with their country on a fundamentally crucial and cultural level, and to see themselves and their stories on the small-screen.

I also put to you that this is an entirely bipartisan stance – as it has been historically, when it comes to securing and nurturing Australia's film and television legacy. I direct you to the policy steps taken by both Labor and Liberal Prime Ministers, in Gorton and Whitlam interventions during the early 1970s.

Prime Minister John Gorton created the Experimental Film Fund, and the Australian Film Development Corporation, both of which fostered an independent Australian film industry, and increased government funding for the arts generally. While Gough Whitlam's Government further built on these foundations, by creating the Australian Film and Television School (AFTRS) and establishing a Film and Television Board as one of the initial specialist panels in the new Australia Council for the Arts.

Both of these changes to the culture, funding and investment in our film and television led to a 'New Wave' of education and creation. Australia produced nearly 400 feature films between 1970 and 1985 – more than we had ever made before. Many of these films are today recognised as classics worldwide, but they also went a long way to shaping modern Australian identity, both at home and abroad. *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), *Breaker Morant* (1977), *Mad Max* (1979), *My Brilliant Career* (1979), and *Gallipoli* (1981) – to name a very few.

The same went for our Australian television of the time – majority of which were dramas – they went a long way to our citizens seeing themselves and their everyday lives and concerns portrayed for the first time, and even now their status as classic Australian telly are celebrated and

heralded as a turning-point in our collective conscience of what it is and means to “be Australian”; *Skippy The Bush Kangaroo* (1968 – 1970), *The Sullivans* (1976 – 1983), *Homicide* (1964 – 1977), *Prisoner* (1979 – 1986), and *Number 96* (1972 – 1977) among them. These are the shows that put Australia – our creators, and stories – on the map. They gave us a voice we’d never had before, and I ask you now not to take that away or diminish it in any way.

There are still so many stories to tell – please don’t cut them off by diminishing content-quotas and denying us the drama and children’s television that go such a long way to shaping how Australians see themselves and their country in a pop-cultural landscape. Please instead lift this industry up – by insisting a level playing field of quotas for streaming services like Netflix too. Please make it clear that ‘light entertainment’ and repackaged reality-TV from overseas is not the same as truly investing in Australian storytelling.

I thank you, and implore you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'D' and 'B' joined together.

Danielle Binks
Literary Agent
Australian Literary Agents’ Association (ALAA)