

## **Gail Stroud**

Freelance Costume designer

### Supporting Australian stories on our screens- options paper submission

My name is Gail Stroud. I work in all aspects of Costume for Film and Television. I have dedicated the past 20 years to this occupation, which is a highly skilled craft and art. I achieved a Masters of Costume Design from the AFTRS, a school which is world renowned for it's excellence and highly qualified and sought after graduates.

I chose to pursue this career for many reasons, but what I always can pinpoint as the genesis for my love of the screen, art, and performance is the ABC's "Countdown". As a child of the '80s, growing up in rural NSW on a cattle and wheat farm, to be able to see other aspects of Australia's (and the world's) culture, to see that there may be another world out there for me, was hugely inspiring. We had two TV channels available in those days- the ABC and an amalgamation of the commercial networks. My other favourite program (well, apart from Dr Who and The Goodies of course) was "A Country Practice". And this was for the opposite reason- I could see that the world I lived in- the country, and the trials and tribulations that went along with living there, had validity. These people mattered. (The show's lack of indigenous representation is shameful, but that's another matter). I often hear talk and complaints that the "inner city lefties" have no idea about what goes on for those who reside outside it's bubble- well, what better way to change that (erroneous perspective) then tell these stories on screen. To tell as many stories, from as many perspectives and diverse walks of life that exist in this country. To enable this huge and wide ranging place to feel a little more intimate, to enable compassion and empathy to be felt for those who are otherwise so far flung, just by providing space for their stories to shine.

On a local level there is no one network more important to our cultural identity

than the ABC. As a public broadcaster the ABC is in a position to tell everyone's story without obligation to advertisers. Not all stories are great for sales, but all stories deserve a space to be told, even if their telling makes us uncomfortable or only speaks to a minor demographic. Those small communities deserve to see themselves on screen just as much as the status quo in the community.

If policy changes (such as streaming services such as Netflix required to commission a certain percentage of Australian productions) were to come into place, it would be of huge benefit, both to industry practitioners such as myself, and the broader community. I can testify the follow-on effect of film and television production and how it benefits the community from a financial point of view from experience- working as a Costume Buyer, the amount of money often spent by a production at small local businesses can be really significant.

As it is currently, the amount of highly skilled, experienced and talented practitioners in any given department involved in film/tv production, far outweighs the amount of jobs available at any given time. Job security is tenuous for many of us- having a second career / income stream is not out of the ordinary. It seems counter productive to educate and nurture this talent through such high quality (public) institutions such as NIDA, AFTRS, VCA, Swinburne et al, only to have students graduate and choose to move overseas to pursue their careers, having far fewer opportunities available locally. So many of us choose to stay in Australia- telling our stories is as important to us as the joy of the actual work. We are passionate about our shared experiences here, passionate about reflecting all the unique aspects of our society to the world. To have the potential opportunity to produce more content locally due to these companies being required to invest in our industry, could equate to larger budgets, more money spent within the community, job creation, as well as the opportunity for more advanced career progression for professionals who do choose to pursue their careers locally. It's a no-brainer.

Finally on children's TV. I am a mum and I want my child to grow up with an Australian accent, knowing about our culture, being proud that she comes from the country with the oldest continuous living culture in the world, has an Australian sense of humour and knows that as an Australian she is in a brave progressive country. She is 8 years old- and honestly, she prefers to watch "Bluey" over "Peppa Pig", "The Inbestigators" over "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles", any day. She loves the feeling of 'getting' the characters, it could be her or her friends in the story. Also, in my opinion, Australian children's programs, are in general, of exceptionally, consistently, high quality. Netflix are buying them anyway- shouldn't we be playing the long game and be requiring them to commission them? Our stories are actually in high demand internationally, this is a unique opportunity that could be revolutionary for our industry, and how the world sees us.

Make us proud of our arts, our ancient history, our hugely diverse, endlessly fascinating society and it's inhabitants, and their stories. Nurture this uniquely talented creative industry, value it. The rest of the world certainly does. Let's stop giving it away so freely. They are happy to pay us for what we are worth, I can guarantee it. Significant change is the only way to accomplish that.

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**I wish for my submission to be anonymous:** No

**I wish for my submission to be private:** No

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**Supporting documents:**

*This submission has been lodged via the [Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance](#).*