

**TRAINING PATHWAYS  
FOR TASMANIAN  
SCREEN PRACTITIONERS**

REPORT TO TASMANIAN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES LTD  
BY DR DAVID COURT, COMPTON SCHOOL

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## Context

Tasmanian Creative Industries (TCI) commissioned David Court to:

- Consult broadly with the secondary, vocational, tertiary and non- accredited screen training providers in Tasmania to develop a comprehensive pathways document for the sector, acknowledging the growing role of graphic design and ICT in the requirements of the professional sector.
- Assess curriculum within the scope of the creative industries, with specific engagement with Screen Tasmania, Department of Education, TasTAFE, The Foundry, UTAS.
- Develop and deliver documentation as to the recognised career pathways within the state and by extension into other vocational and educational providers and employment opportunities within Australia.

The work was undertaken from December 2017 to March 2018. It follows on from a workforce profile and plan developed by Stenning & Associates (2016).

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David Court is Executive Director of the Compton School, Australia's first dedicated business school for creative people. He was formerly Head of Screen Business at the Australian Film Television & Radio School.

## Methodology

This report is based on qualitative investigation of issues identified in the brief. Interviews were conducted with 16 stakeholders in December 2017 and March 2018. Some of these stakeholders were re-interviewed, which provided an opportunity to capture their feedback on preliminary findings. Site visits were made to TasTAFE's Alanvale campus, Rosny College, the Foundry's Hobart campus and University of Tasmania. In addition, several published reports on media and workforce trends were consulted. For details of interviewees and reports, please see the Appendix.



# Findings

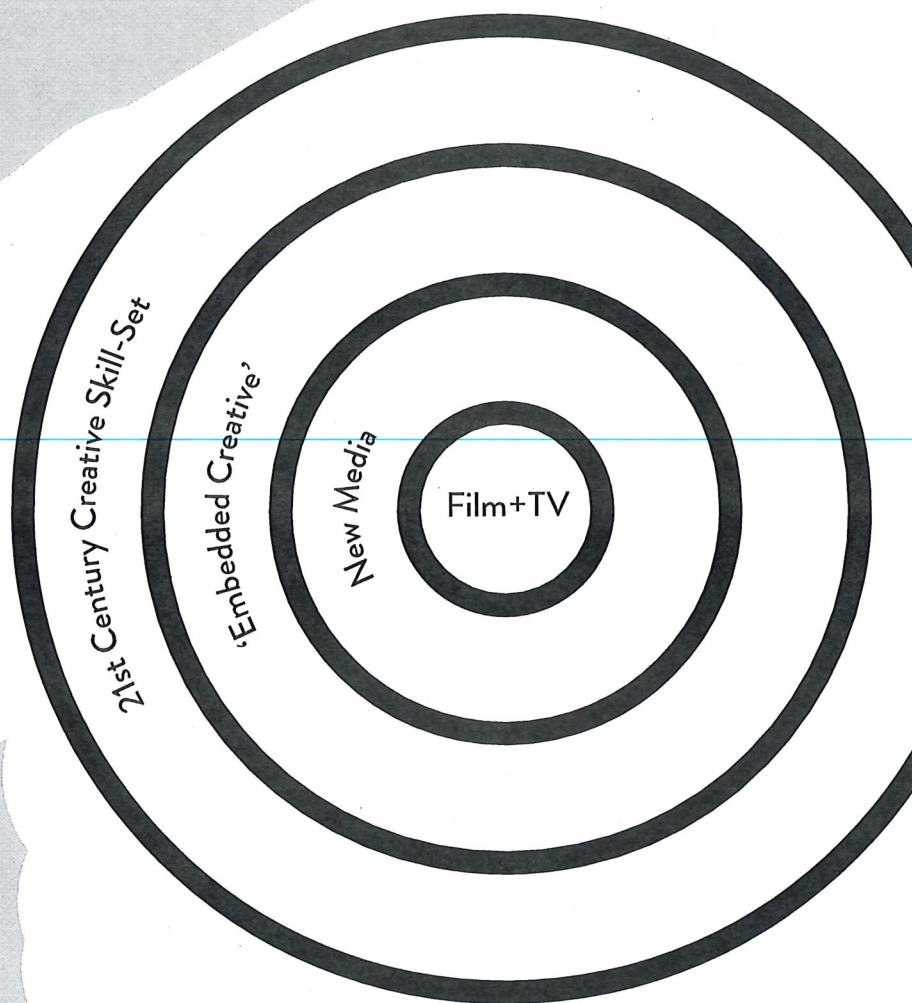
- 1 Having regard to student numbers, the training pathway is broad and well supported, from matriculation colleges through TasTAFE and University College, to undergraduate and postgraduate degree programs at the University of Tasmania (AQF Levels 3 to 9). The sector is dynamic, with a major new entrant, the Foundry, introducing an Associate Degree program in Applied Design at University College in 2018, and UTas renewing and diversifying its offerings at the School of Creative Arts and the new Media School.
- 2 There are some gaps in the pathway. Producers report difficulty in accessing some specialised skill-sets such as location management, a gap which shows up when major productions are undertaken in the State. Training in creative business practices is also patchy and where it is offered, low-level. More generally, there is a shortage of opportunities for internships and on-the-job training, making the transition into paid employment difficult for graduates – and frustrating for employers.
- 3 Employment and career opportunities for screen media graduates are morphing. While traditional media offer few new opportunities – and may in fact be in decline<sup>1</sup> – there is evidence of significant new opportunities in digital media and at the intersections with ICT industries. There is also evidence of demand for so-called ‘embedded creatives’ and for the ‘21st century’ skill-sets of screen media graduates in the wider, non-media business sector.<sup>2</sup>

1 PwC's 2017 *Outlook* projects -4.7% compound annual growth in free-to-air television in the 5 years to 2021, and just 0.7% compound annual growth in filmed entertainment. These rates compare to 4.8% projected compound growth in interactive entertainment and 3.8% in subscription television.

2 The Creative Industries Innovation Centre estimated that ‘almost half of those employed in creative occupations are working within non-creative industries...as embedded creatives’. See *Valuing Australia's creative industries*, p10.

- 4 Like higher education providers everywhere, Tasmanian providers and the curricula they teach are struggling to address and keep pace with the profound shifts unfolding in media technologies, platforms and markets, production methodologies, business models and audience expectations. These shifts suggest a need for more frequent review of course offerings and resource allocation.
- 5 There appears to be, in most institutions, a strong orientation towards traditional modes of film and television production, with less attention given to emerging production modes and formats and the markets for them. This orientation reflects the training and experience of teachers (and is reflected at many mainland institutions too).
- 6 While attempts are made by various individuals and institutions to keep track of alumni career progression, there is no systematically structured feedback from alumni about their employment and professional outcomes to guide institutional decision-making about training needs, curriculum development, and resource allocation.
- 7 There is a surprising lack of co-ordination and even awareness of activity between the different players. This inhibits feedback and review processes by limiting the scope for information sharing.

## Markets for screen media skills







## Film+TV

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The traditional employers for screen media graduates – film and television production companies, TV stations, advertising agencies.

## New Media

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Encompassing new media platforms (Netflix, Stan), social media (Facebook, Instagram), game platforms (Xbox, PS4, smartphones) and branded content.

## ‘Embedded Creative’

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Creative work in companies outside the creative industries. Research suggests nearly 50% of creative employment fits this category (CIIC 2011).

## 21st Century Creative Skill-Set

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Employment in the wider economy based on skill-sets learned in media programs.



## Discussion

**‘By 2020, more than a third of the desired core skill sets of most occupations will be comprised of skills that are not yet considered crucial to the job today’**

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WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM, 2016, THE FUTURE OF JOBS

**‘Half the job is doing the job, and the other half is finding ways to get along with people and tuning yourself into the delicacy of the situation’**

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FILM EDITOR AND SOUND DESIGNER WALTER MURCH

For some years now the driving characteristic of screen media has been change — change at every level. Technologies, platforms, markets, production methodologies and business models all have been subject to disruptive and continuing innovation.

As teachers and institutions try to track these changes, there are bound to be lags and gaps in the training they offer. It is these lags and gaps that concern us here.

## ADDRESSING THE GAPS

Producers have reported difficulty in accessing people with specialised skill-sets like location management. Given the relatively low frequency of major screen productions in the State, this is likely to be a continuing problem. Realistically, if local screen practitioners are to develop these skills it is likely to be by working on interstate productions and/or undertaking training at interstate institutions, rather than local institutions offering this training.

It may also be possible to induce people with relevant skill-sets to relocate to Tasmania – particularly where there is the possibility of arbitraging real estate prices as between the mainland and Tasmania.

By contrast, the gap in creative business skills training is one that potentially can be met locally through development of new courses at or with UTas. Recent research confirms the importance of such training. A survey of 400 screen practitioners and nearly 100 firms conducted by the Australian Film Television & Radio School showed that ‘understanding how to run a business’ is the top rated skills gap, followed by ‘work/relevant experience’ and ‘understanding new technologies/advances’ (AFTRS 2016). A similar survey of Australian screen producers showed 48% considered business skills very important to their success and many of these planned to undertake study in this area (Verhoeven et al 2011).

There is also the challenge of securing internships and on-the-job training for students approaching graduation. Some part of this challenge could be met *within institutions* by developing practitioner-led workshops that expose students to mundane in-demand skills such as how to open a file, make journal entries, or understand key terms in widely-used contracts. A survey of employers conducted by Compton School showed students were ‘bright enough’ but often lacked basic office skills as well as practice in key creative skills of collaboration, giving and receiving feedback, pitching and contracting.<sup>3</sup>

Meeting these training needs through placements, internships, mentoring and on-the-job training is obviously desirable but does place significant demands on participating businesses. To avoid exhausting this resource, it is important that demands are co-ordinated between institutions, so that businesses are not subjected to multiple, competing demands. Institutions should also take steps to ensure a ‘two-way street’ of benefits. For businesses as for students, the opportunity to develop ongoing connections is a key attraction, and this requires close matching of students with businesses, as well as monitoring and feedback.

<sup>3</sup> The survey involved in depth interviews with owners of screen businesses including Matchbox, CJZ, Screentime, Arenamedia, and Jungle. A brief summary of findings can be found at <http://compton.school/the-work/workshop-work-ready/>.

## **A CO-ORDINATION PROBLEM**

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this consultancy has been the lack of connection between the different institutions. Relations appear to be mired in mistrust; the parties have little curiosity about each other; and opportunities for collaboration go unexplored. In a larger market than Tasmania, this might not matter. But in a small, isolated market, it works against each party's interests, magnifying the negative effects of their isolation. Co-ordination should be a minimum goal, and co-operation the expected case.

This would play out as information sharing between institutions, cross-institutional pathways for students, and strategic co-operation between the institutions for agreed goals. Conversely, in the absence of co-ordination, the outcomes are likely to be gaps, inefficiencies, and missed opportunities.<sup>3</sup>

Against this background, the proposed Screen Sector Working Group offers a breakthrough opportunity for the parties to come together in an organised forum.

## **TOO MANY GRADUATES?**

Among producers there is a common concern that too many students are graduating from media programs and the industry will not be able to absorb them.

This concern rests on a view of the media sector that is being overtaken by events. It is true that employment prospects in traditional media — cinema and free-to-air television — are static or in decline. In Tasmania, these traditional industries probably have capacity to absorb only a handful of graduates annually. The same is true of media schools in other states. But most media graduates are heading elsewhere. So-called new media are booming: there is strong take-up of subscription video-on-demand services; demand for branded video content on social media platforms is growing at an explosive rate; new virtual and augmented reality technologies are gathering momentum; and many major corporations that once considered media a peripheral concern find themselves turning into *de facto* media businesses needing to communicate daily with their customers, employees and stakeholders.

This boiling mix offers many new pathways and business possibilities for media graduates — pathways and opportunities that simply did not exist just a few years ago.



These changes mean not only is there increasing demand for media graduates, but that the nature of this demand is changing, with increasing emphasis on what might be called the '21st century skill-set' of team work, problem solving, user empathy and communication. Anecdotal evidence suggests these skills are in wide demand across the business sector.<sup>4</sup>

In short, it is probable that an increasing proportion of future graduates will find employment in the emerging 'new' media and in 'embedded' creative roles in businesses outside the creative industries.

## QUALITY OF FEEDBACK

For teaching institutions, the key challenge is keeping track of the changes described here – changes in media technologies, work practices, production standards, business models, job descriptions etc. Teachers and institutions respond to this challenge through regular consultation with employers and, less formally, by staying in touch with alumni.

But with the rate of change increasing, it may be that new measures are necessary.

In particular, reliance on regular canvassing of employers runs the risk of missing the new categories of employment and employer now emerging – the new media categories, the businesses employing 'embedded creatives', and companies employing media graduates in non-traditional roles, for their '21st century' skill-sets.

A good case can be made for more systematic tracking of alumni as the primary source of information about changes in demand for media graduates and the skills they carry to the marketplace. Alumni are best placed to report not only on demand for their services but also which skills are in demand, and how their training has fitted them for the work they are doing.

Given the relatively small number of media graduates from Tasmanian institutions, and the potential to use low-cost social media tools to track them, a cohort study may be feasible. This would track all media graduates from a given year, say 2018, for a specified period, say three years, with a view to building a comprehensive picture of the changes now occurring in screen media employment and their implications for teaching institutions.

<sup>4</sup> Associate Professor Bem Le Hunte, Director of the highly successful Creative Intelligence & Innovation (CII) program at University of Technology Sydney, reports there is strong demand for CII graduates from banks and other employers outside traditional creative industries.



## Recommendations

- 1 The Screen Sector Working Group assume responsibility for co-ordinating information sharing between its participating institutions.

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- 2 The Working Group investigate the feasibility of carrying out a three-year cohort study of screen media graduates from the participating institutions exploring how and where they are employed, the nature of the employer's business, the nature of the work, the skills demanded and other information designed to reveal how their training has fitted them for the work they are doing.

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- 3 The Group explore the implications of changes in media technologies, work practices, production standards and business models for screen media curricula and teaching resource allocation.

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## Appendix – Interviews

**ABI BINNING**, Executive Director, Wide Angle Tasmania

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**ANTHONY BONNEY**, Acting Executive Officer,  
Tasmanian Creative Industries Ltd

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**SARAH CADDICK**, Head of Comms, Foundry

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**DR ANNA CAREW**, Senior Workforce Development Consultant,  
Department of State Growth

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**SIMONE CUNLIFFE**, Head of Performing Arts, Rosny College

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**GRAHAM GATES**, Chair, Screen Sector Working Group

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**DAVID GURNEY**, Creative Director, Blue Rocket Productions

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**DR BILL HART**, Acting Head of Art, Head of Studio (Time Based Media),  
School of Creative Arts, University of Tasmania

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**CHRISTINE HUGHES**, TasTAFE Education Manager, Creative Industries,  
North/North-West

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**MATT LEACH**, Education Lead (The Wild), Foundry

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**JANE POLLEY**, Curriculum Teacher Leader – The Arts, Department of Education

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**ALICIA RACKETT**, Mission Controller, Blue Rocket Productions,  
Deputy Chair, Wide Angle Tasmania

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**DR KRISTY DE SALAS**, Senior Lecturer, University of Tasmania,  
Program Director, Games & Creative Technologies Research Group,  
Chair, Tasmanian Creative Industries Ltd

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**ALEX SANGSTON**, Executive Manager, Screen Tasmania

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**JANE STAPLETON**, Industry Development Manager, Screen Tasmania

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**DR KATHLEEN WILLIAMS**, Head of Discipline, Journalism,  
Media & Communications

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