



A Safe and Sustainable Industry - Overview

Long hours and consequent extremely poor work-life balance is one of the most serious systemic issues in our industry, alongside a lack of management capacity, limited training pathways, and a need for more investment in safety and industry resources.

The demands of the industry create poor mental and physical health for crew, which, despite health and safety laws, goes largely unaddressed.

This makes skills shortages worse due to crew burnout, high turnover of people with caring responsibilities, and low inclusion of First Nations people and workers from culturally diverse backgrounds.

However, the growth in demand, both in terms of volume and higher production values, have increased demands on productions and are exacerbating many of the underlying issues that have been part of the industry for a long time.

When a skilled, experienced crew member leaves the industry because of a bad experience on one or more productions, it is a loss to the whole industry. Similarly, if we invest in training people who leave because they encounter ongoing and seemingly insoluble problems, we have wasted that investment. It's in everyone's interests to make sure that every production is up to standard.

In order to elevate and grow our industry it's vital that we tackle these systemic issues.

Causes

We agree that pressures on producers contribute to crew working long hours.

Too often the gaps between script, budget and schedule are left to work themselves out, hoping that crew will find a way. As a result, unrealistic pre-production and shooting schedules have become endemic. This results in wasted time, money, and effort; lower quality; and ultimately in blow-outs of hours with all of the associated work-life balance and mental health costs that flow on to crew.

We can address these issues by setting realistic expectations from the start. We need to be prepared to have more rigorous assessments of schedule and budget limitations against creative needs.

By investing in the time and skills to facilitate better planning, better pre-production, and better communication we can work within those limitations to address issues, collaborating and working out pathways to achieve the desired result.

We need producers to be able to manage decision-making timelines and schedules so that productions and crew can produce quality work in a sustainable way.

Proposed measures

Accreditation for producers

In line with the need to increase management standards across the industry, we want the skills and knowledge of experienced professional producers to be recognised and to become the industry standard. There needs to be better professional development for inexperienced producers through education and on-the-job mentoring.

Code of Practice

We need government to understand that underfunded productions are unsafe productions, and that productions that 'burn' crew, locations, environment, suppliers and the industry's reputation are damaging the sustainability of the whole industry. We need an industry code of practice attached to financing that makes these expectations clear and to which producers are accountable.

Screen Industry Development

We need to have a joint goal and ongoing effort between MEAA, SPA and government to develop our sustainable workforce capacity and industry resources, including a best practice guide, safety monitoring, and skills development. The current gaps in our industry represent opportunities to up our game. With the new government we have an opportunity to work collaboratively to make our industry stronger.