



Producers want film stimulus package

Garry Maddox
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WHILE *Samson & Delilah* keeps winning awards and *Mao's Last Dancer* is a hit, the country's film producers see tough times ahead because of the impact of the global financial crisis.

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The president of the Screen Producers Association of Australia, Anthony Ginnane, predicts a severe downturn in film production within 18 months. The Federal Government's tax offset is boosting TV drama and documentary production, he says, but is not working for feature films.

As a result, the association is lobbying for a film industry stimulus package of between \$25 million and \$35 million a year for three years to support films with 75 to 85 per cent of funding from other sources.

"It's not the fault of the offset," Ginnane says. "It's not the fault of the producers. It's simply the fact that the offset was a financial model created to fit into a landscape that has irrevocably changed in the last 18 months."

Without extra industry support, Ginnane says there will be a "significant and maybe even massive" downturn in film production, leading to job losses and the fragmentation of industry infrastructure.

Big-budget movies such as *Happy Feet 2* and *Mad Max: Fury Road* will still be financed out of Hollywood, but the rest of the industry will be "20 credit card films".

But the association is unlikely to get extra support from the Government before a planned review of the offset next year.

A spokesman for the Minister for the Arts, Peter Garrett, insists the incentive is proving "very effective".

"Screen Australia in its annual drama survey for 2008-09 has reported the highest level of local film and television production in many years," he says.

"Producers are using the offset actively and effectively. Screen Australia estimates the offset may provide \$150-\$160 million in indirect government assistance to this year's production slate alone."

The chief executive of Screen Australia, Ruth Harley, accepts the financing outlook for films is "pretty bleak" but says there has been interest from the Australian arms of Hollywood studios to take up the slack.

"The Australian studio representatives have a greater appetite for Australian films than they've had for many years."

This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2009/11/19/1258219922495.html>