

FILMINK

VALE METRO SCREEN (1981- 2015)

by Greg Dolgoplov | November 12, 2015 09:03 | Edited November 12, 2015 09:04

Sydney's Metro Screen hosted their last hurrah last night, presenting research on emerging screen practitioners and inciting heated discussion and calls to arms.



On the eve of another famous dismissal, Metro Screen brought together their community filling up the entire Chauvel cinema to mark the end, celebrate the legacy, commiserate and think about the future. As of 23 December Metro Screen will be no more. At least as an organisation, as a teaching institution, as an equipment hire place, as a physical entity and as a place where careers are launched and partnerships formed. Most importantly as an intangible concept, Metro Screen will shut its doors at the end of December with the de-funding by Screen Australia.

But as a tangible resource and in a step towards unmasking the current funding situation and the state of the 'industry', Metro Screen launched 'Emerging Visions' research about the state of play for emerging screen practitioners. And it makes for sobering reading – see the full report [here](#).

After the official presentations of the research by the former CEO and board members the big questions that resounded from all corners of the theatre sounded a little like a mix of Chekhovian wistfulness and Leninist determination: "What is going to happen next?" "What can we do now?" and "Who is to blame?" People were energised. There was a feeling that this was not the end. There was a shared feeling of community wanting to continue. The Q&A session was less about questions than it was about heartfelt statements. Marcus Gillezeau who was a former president of Metro Screen knew exactly who to blame, "Screen Australia had failed us, failed us as a

sector". There was no one who identified themselves as being from Screen Oz to call for a right of reply (well at least not brave enough to identify themselves). This was repeated by others; an industry wide response is required, not just from the emerging sector, but the entire film and television and screen industries, like the one generated by the Arts community when they were faced by savage cuts. But the cynics shook their heads and acknowledged that the film sector is far from united. Others called for an immediate discussion of battle strategies.

The enormous capacity gap identified by the research and by so many ex-Metro Screen staff and students is the question of what is going to happen next with the emerging sector. This is the sector between the stages of earning and learning that needs the most nurturing. It is this key sector that is unfunded and unsupported but where so much of Australia's creativity resides. One of the key findings of the research was that "Federal government support to the screen industry, including the Producer Offset, has increased by 90% since 2006/07, but targeted funds for emerging screen practitioners will have shrunk by around 80% by 2016/17." That means, notwithstanding Metro Screen specifically, where do people go in the transition period between education and a full time career? How are people going to get to the next level if the transition organisations are dismantled?

These are big questions that will need to be grappled with by the film and television communities. With the passing of Metro Screen other organisations may form to take its place or there may remain a gaping hole because it is difficult and not for the faint-hearted. But Metro Screen will live on as a community, as an idea, as a source of connections and friendships forever...