

SCREEN INDUSTRY

Grievance

MS C.M. ROWE (Belmont) [9.37 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Culture and the Arts and concerns the McGowan government's investment and commitment to supporting and developing the WA screen industry.

The film industry is one I am deeply passionate about, having previously served as a board member and chairperson of the Film and Television Institute WA for 10 years, and I actually completed a diploma of screenwriting from the FTI many moons ago. During my time with the FTI, I saw firsthand how impactful its programs are, supporting so many emerging filmmakers as they learn and hone their craft and helping to launch careers for many Western Australian creatives. My passion for film stems from the ability of screen content to capture our stories and culture in such a truly powerful way. It shapes our perception of the world, affects Australian culture and promotes our national identity, and that is why it is so vital that we see local content on our local screens here in Australia. But there is also another benefit to the screen industry, and that is the economic value. Globally, the economic value of the screen production industry was estimated at approximately \$245 billion prior to COVID-19, and Australia's share of that is around \$4.6 billion, which is very significant. In the 2020–21 financial year, Screen Australia reported Australian drama expenditure as \$1.9 billion. In that same year, the McGowan government has provided over \$11.5 million in screen production funding, which has resulted in over \$39 million expenditure to the WA economy. This investment in the WA screen industry content created 3 839 full-time equivalent jobs and generated \$269 million in total economic income.

Naturally, screen productions set in our beautiful state promote Western Australia interstate and internationally, driving domestic and international tourism, with visitors seeking to experience our breathtaking locations that they have seen on their screens. This is supported by Deloitte Access Economics, which found that 230 000 tourists visit or extend their stay in Australia each year because of the screen content they have seen.

Screen production is a highly technical, skilled and job-intensive sector. WA is home to many talented creatives. Local feature film *How to Please a Woman* has enjoyed a successful run at the Australian box office since its release in May this year. It was filmed in Fremantle and around Perth. *How to Please a Woman* is the first feature film by WA writer-director Renée Webster. The film stars UK actress Sally Phillips, Australian actors Erik Thomson, Alexander England and Cameron Daddo, and Western Australians Hayley McElhinney, Tasma Walton, Caroline Brazier and Roz Hammond. It was produced by Western Australian—and friend of mine—Tania Chambers, from Feisty Dame Productions, and Judi Levine.

WA's documentary, or factual, sector continues to produce award-winning productions, reaching audiences globally. *Outback Truckers*, from WA's Prospero Productions, reached a hundred episodes last year. Over its nine seasons, *Outback Truckers* has created over 450 jobs and supported the development of WA creatives. *Shipwreck Hunters Australia*, by Fremantle-based VAM Media, was the first Australian documentary commissioned by Disney+. Artemis Media's landmark documentary series *Australia's Health Revolution with Dr Michael Mosley* revealed how new science can reverse Australia's type 2 diabetes epidemic. I would like to take this opportunity to give a shout-out to a good friend of mine, Levon Polinelli, who is making his feature film, *Emu War*, here in WA.

As the capacity of the WA film industry grows, the opportunity to attract increased federal government incentives and international investment has the potential to support increased screen production and employment in the state. The federal government's \$540 million location incentive has attracted 35 international productions, generating over \$3 billion in private investment and creating over 22 500 employment opportunities.

I would like to ask the minister what the McGowan government is doing to support screen production in the state and to outline its commitment to growing the WA screen sector. Thank you for taking my grievance.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Minister for Culture and the Arts) [9.42 am]: I would like to thank the member for Belmont for her very important grievance. I know she has a deep and abiding interest in the culture and arts sector more broadly. She highlighted that her passion was ignited, in film in particular, through her wonderful work on the board of the old Film and Television Institute, but I think the member is being a little modest about her real history. Her love of the arts was actually ignited at The Mount Players in Macedon. I have heard stories from her sister—who is, of course, my parliamentary secretary, Hon Samantha Rowe—about both of their escapades on the stage with The Mount Players.

Ms C.M. Rowe: An illustrious career!

Mr D.A. Templeman: It was illustrious, and I understand that you were both very enthusiastic but were considered by one director as not necessarily great singers. You were told, "Look enthusiastic but please don't make too much sound." I can only say that that is the rumour.

Seriously, though, the member has raised an important point. We are absolutely focused on making sure that the screen industry in Western Australia grows for all the reasons that the member outlined, including, of course, the important economic considerations. The screen industry worldwide is going through a remarkable transformation

in many respects. Audiences around the world are hungry for content. They are hungry for unique stories, which puts Western Australia, and Australia, in a very good position. There is intense interest in filming in Australia for the reasons that the member highlighted. Not only are we a safe place to film and to be engaged in film, but we also have some remarkable backdrops in which to host film activity.

Ms C.M. Rowe interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: That is very true. Indeed, in Western Australia we are gifted and blessed with respect to daylight hours as well. Let me assure the member of some important things. The first is that the McGowan government is absolutely committed to making sure that the screen industry not only grows but becomes a legitimate new industry job creator for the future. We have already been successful with the regional film fund, now called the Western Australian Screen Fund, which has funded and continues to fund activity in regional Western Australia. There are productions like *Itch*, series 1 and 2; *Mystery Road*, series 1 to 3; *Breath; H is for Happiness*; and *Red Dirt Riders*. All of these more recent film activities continue to not only tell, in many respects, local stories to the world, but also use unique and highly desirable filming locations.

The member mentioned an interesting statistic in terms of tourism. One of the focuses of the screen fund is to increase the amount of filming that takes place in Western Australia, be it documentaries, series or movies, and that is happening. But, as the member highlighted, the importance of infrastructure remains a critical factor as well. That is why the government is absolutely committed to the \$105 million investment in the screen facility, and the Minister for Transport; Planning is working very closely with me in delivering that. That work continues. Our \$20 million screen production attraction fund sits alongside that, and that is an important investment in enticing activity to Western Australia. I can assure the member that Screenwest—and, indeed, the government—is continuing to look at all opportunities for film activity to take place in Western Australia.

The week before last I hosted a round table with a number of key players in the Western Australian screen industry because we are developing our state's screen strategy. This screen strategy is going to map out and guide us in terms of the investment in the film industry going forward. Members need not be concerned; we have a very good story to tell. I was recently in Melbourne and visited Docklands Studios, which has been developed in the old Melbourne Docklands area. It has recently completed its sixth sound stage—some 20,000 square feet of production space. The program of work continues to increase, which is the missing piece of the jigsaw for Western Australia in terms of film screen infrastructure. That is going to mean that the momentum that we already have will be fulfilled.

I want to thank the member for raising this. I think it is important to understand that in Western Australia we have some remarkable filmmakers, creators, writers, directors and crews. When we create an ongoing pathway or pipeline of work, it means that that expertise and creative talent stays here. It also means there is a clear career pathway for actors and actresses, for performers who are studying at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts and for those who are studying and practising in the technical side of filmmaking and film production in our other institutions.

The member has raised a very important grievance today, one which highlights and underpins the McGowan government's faith in the screen industry as a genuine creator and creative industry driver. But the member has also highlighted that the screen industry is an employer. I am going to a film set in a couple of hours' time at the Claremont Showground. There is a *Kid Snow* scene being filmed there. They have just finished filming in Kalgoorlie. When you go to a set you will see over 150 people working on the ground, creating. Thanks for your grievance, member.