



Children's TV Industry in Australia

- To keep their licence all commercial television channels must broadcast a minimum of 390 hours a year of children's television. Some of this must be locally produced.
- For every half an hour of live action it costs between \$250,000 - \$500,000 to produce. For a series there are 26 episodes that run for approx 22 minutes each.
- The commercial channels will only pay up to \$100,000 per episode. The rest of the cost is made up by overseas pre-sales to other television networks, pay TV networks, Government funding bodies, distribution bodies, and the producer. If there's not enough money to make the film or series then it won't be made.
- Ideas are cheap. Producers can option them for up to five years for only \$1.00 (one dollar).
- The development of a series begins with:
 - ❖ An idea that the producer believes is viable. This may just be a name, some characters and a concept.
 - ❖ The idea is then taken to a story team to discuss. The story team is likely to include a script producer and story editor.
 - ❖ They work on the idea and firstly, produce a logline – this one sentence on what the story is about.
 - ❖ They then work on a one page synopsis that gives more information about the character, the story and the concept.
 - ❖ After this a pitch document is produced. This is all the information a writer will need to write the series and includes one page of production information such as genre, tone, budget, sets; two pages about the characters, and two pages on story examples that should be kept to one paragraph each.
 - ❖ This pitch document is also a sales document and used by the producer to sell the series idea to other channels and to get funding from the government.
 - ❖ If all goes well and enough money is provided then the next step is to story line each episode. This is a scene breakdown with 1-2 sentences about the action of each scene. For a half an hour show there may be up to 35 numbered lines.

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- ❖ This is then sent to the scriptwriter to write the first draft. The time frame is usually two weeks. The final ms is likely to be up to 35 pages.
- ❖ The script editor then goes through the script and makes notes before sending back to the writer.
- ❖ The scriptwriter amends the script and writes the second draft and this is edited until a final script is achieved and the script is released.

In a Script Department the hierarchy is:

Producer

Script Producer/Story Editor

Script Editor

Storyliner

Story consultants

Freelance writers

Script coordinator

- The rewards for scriptwriting are \$7,000 - \$7,500 per half an hour script for live action. This is a one off payment and there are no royalties. For animators the pay is about \$3,500 - \$4,000 for a 12 minute animation. Script editors can earn about \$1,500 a week and Script producers earn around \$2,500 a week. The daily rate for a storyliner is \$600..
- script writers always use a program called Final Draft that is obviously specially tailored for writing scripts

This report was compiled by Prue Mason (www.pruemason.com) while attending a short course on writing a TV series for children's television with AFTRS run by Simon Butters.

We thank Prue for permission to publish this report.