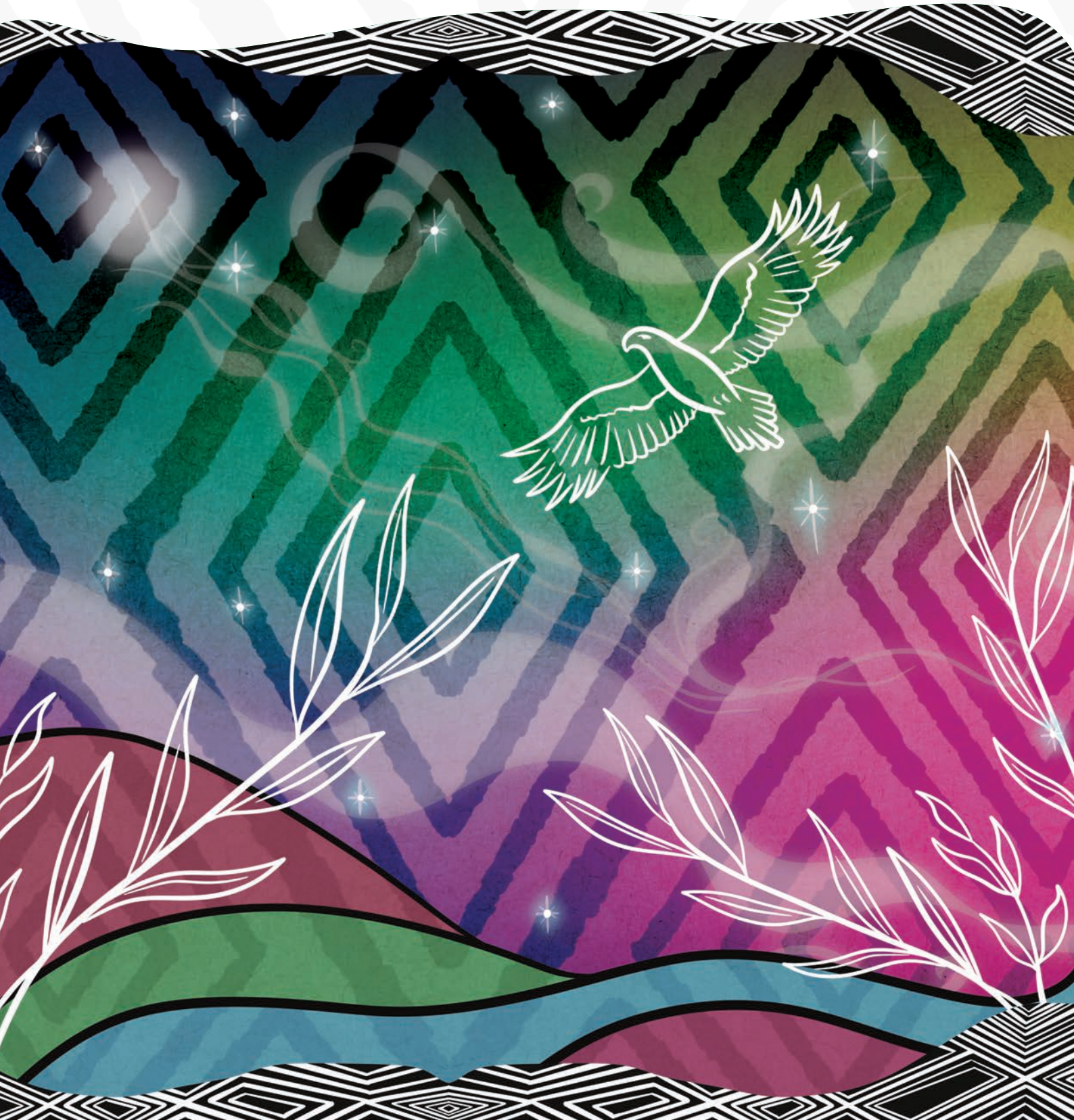


VICSCREEN

FIRST PEOPLES SCREEN STRATEGY
2026–2030





Goolagong. Director Wayne Blair. Photo Ben King.

Acknowledgement of Country

VicScreen acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and their ongoing connection to this land and water, and we pay our respects to their culture and their Elders – past, present and future.

VicScreen acknowledges that First Peoples' self-determination is a human right as enshrined in the

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Building on this, we are committed to developing strong and enduring partnerships with First Peoples that will contribute to growing a prosperous, thriving and strong Victorian First Peoples community.

First Peoples refers to the Traditional Owners of the land now called Victoria and all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples residing and working in the state.

STATEMENT BY VICSCREEN FIRST PEOPLES WORKING GROUP

We write this foreword as members of the VicScreen First Peoples Working Group with deep respect for the responsibility entrusted to us. Since August 2024, we have worked together to help shape a VicScreen First Peoples Screen Strategy that is grounded in cultural sovereignty, creative excellence and self-determination.

This work has been guided by the voices of our community, the strength of our storytellers, and the shared understanding that First Peoples are, and always have been, the original storytellers of this continent. Through careful listening, robust discussion and collective care, we have sought to honour the diversity of Victorian First Peoples' experiences while mapping a clear, practical pathway for a stronger, First Peoples-led screen sector.

The Strategy reflects both the insights gathered through statewide consultations and the values we hold ourselves as First Peoples practitioners – reciprocity, integrity, accountability and respect for those who came before us and those who will follow. It recognises the systemic barriers that continue to exist and the extraordinary talent, capability and leadership already present across our screen ecology. Most importantly, it asserts that First Peoples must lead the decisions that affect our stories, our careers and our futures.

As the VicScreen First Peoples Working Group, we have endeavoured to bring the wisdom, lived experience and unwavering commitment of our Countries and communities into this dialogue to strengthen strategy through shared purpose.

We are deeply grateful for the contribution of the late Wal Saunders. His knowledge, guidance and unwavering commitment to First Peoples storytelling continues to resonate throughout this Strategy. His presence in this work reminds us that lasting change is built not only through policy and initiatives, but through the people who carry culture forward and create space for future generations with strength, care and integrity.

This Strategy represents a milestone but is not necessarily a beginning. It builds on the momentum created through generations of First Peoples screen practitioners on these lands and sets the conditions for long-term change – change that centres First Peoples leadership, invests in capability across generations, and ensures our stories are made, owned and celebrated throughout all communities on our own terms.

We offer this Strategy in the spirit in which it was created: as an instrument of empowerment, a call to action, and a commitment to a future where Victorian First Peoples screen practitioners thrive for the benefit of all.

Sarah Bond
First Peoples Strategic Lead
VicScreen

Tiriki Onus

Tracey Rigney

Tony Briggs

Phoebe Watson

Michael Hudson

MESSAGE FROM VICSCREEN PRESIDENT AND CEO

We are honoured to support the VicScreen First Peoples Screen Strategy 2026–2030, led by the extraordinary leadership of the VicScreen First Peoples Strategy Working Group.

We acknowledge the care, authority and cultural knowledge they have brought to this work. Their leadership has ensured this Strategy is grounded in the aspirations, priorities and rights of First Peoples across Victoria. As a Board and executive, we stand behind the Working Group’s voice and vision.

This Strategy builds on strong foundations already in place at VicScreen. From First Peoples representation at Board level, to a dedicated leadership role within VicScreen, and targeted initiatives such as the First Peoples Business Capability Grant, Participation and Capability Support, and Sovereign Shorts, important progress is underway. Our role is to back focused growth and strengthen the momentum of First Peoples community, practitioners and sector partners.

We acknowledge that more must be done. We are committed to standing behind First Peoples’ self-determination, and to supporting the

development of meaningful screen stories and digital games that are creative, authentic and innovative, and the First Peoples creators, makers and businesses that enable them to be imagined, seen and played. We see the outcomes of this Strategy strengthening pride within communities across Victoria and Australia and connecting audiences around the world with the depth and richness of First Peoples’ talent, stories and games.

This Strategy sets a clear direction. Our responsibility is to listen, to support what has been articulated, and to ensure these Priorities are embedded in how we operate and deliver.

As a Board and executive, we commit to being accountable for delivering on this Strategy and its impact.



George Lekakis
President
VicScreen



Caroline Pitcher
Chief Executive
VicScreen



On the set of *Windcatcher*. Director Tanith Glynn-Maloney. Photo Ben King.

VISION

Victoria is home to a thriving, First Peoples-led screen sector that honours cultural sovereignty and champions storytelling excellence.

PRIORITIES

- 1

Give Voice
We will empower First Peoples content creators and screen leaders.
- 2

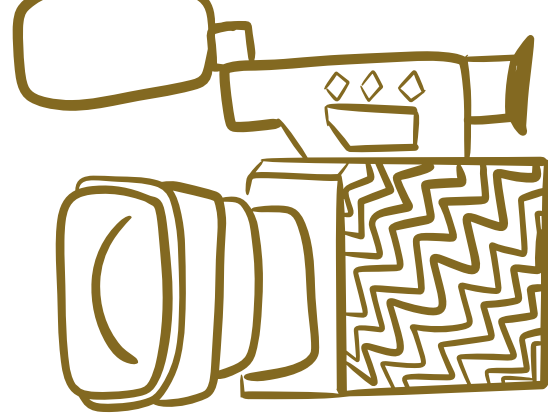
Open Doors
We will grow First Peoples participation in the screen industry.
- 3

Grow Audiences
We will connect First Peoples content to local and international audiences.
- 4

Be Better
We will continue to change the way we do business to better serve the practices and needs of First Peoples screen practitioners.

STRATEGIES

Through bold, tangible actions shaped by First Peoples screen practitioners, VicScreen will transform the screen landscape to reflect the depth, diversity, and brilliance of First Peoples storytelling and First Peoples creatives working in filmmaking for any platform and game development – locally, nationally, and globally.



PRIORITY 1 **GIVE VOICE**

We will empower First Peoples content creators and screen leaders by:

- Fast tracking the development of:
 - › First Peoples creatives, producers, writers, directors and game developers, at any stage of production for screen and games content
 - › First Peoples-led businesses, and
 - › First Peoples leaders within the screen sector.
- Designing and implementing a regular production initiative specifically to develop and showcase First Peoples key creatives (for example, Sovereign Shorts).
- Supporting First Peoples-led businesses to build capacity and attract investment and/or philanthropic support.
- Advocating for greater First Peoples participation on screen industry-related boards and committees and providing or securing support for the professional development of First Peoples leaders in the screen industry.

Journey Home, David Gulpilil. Directors Trisha Morton-Thomas and Maggie Miles. Photo Allan Collins.



Left: *Dya (Country)*. Director Tracey Rigney. Photo Ivan Masic. Top-right: *Invincible Spirit*. Directors Mark Thomson and David Callow. Photo David Callow. Bottom right: *Rebel Art (We Are Still Here)*. Director Tracey Rigney. Photo Jackson Finter.

PRIORITY 2 **OPEN DOORS**



We will grow First Peoples participation in the screen industry by:

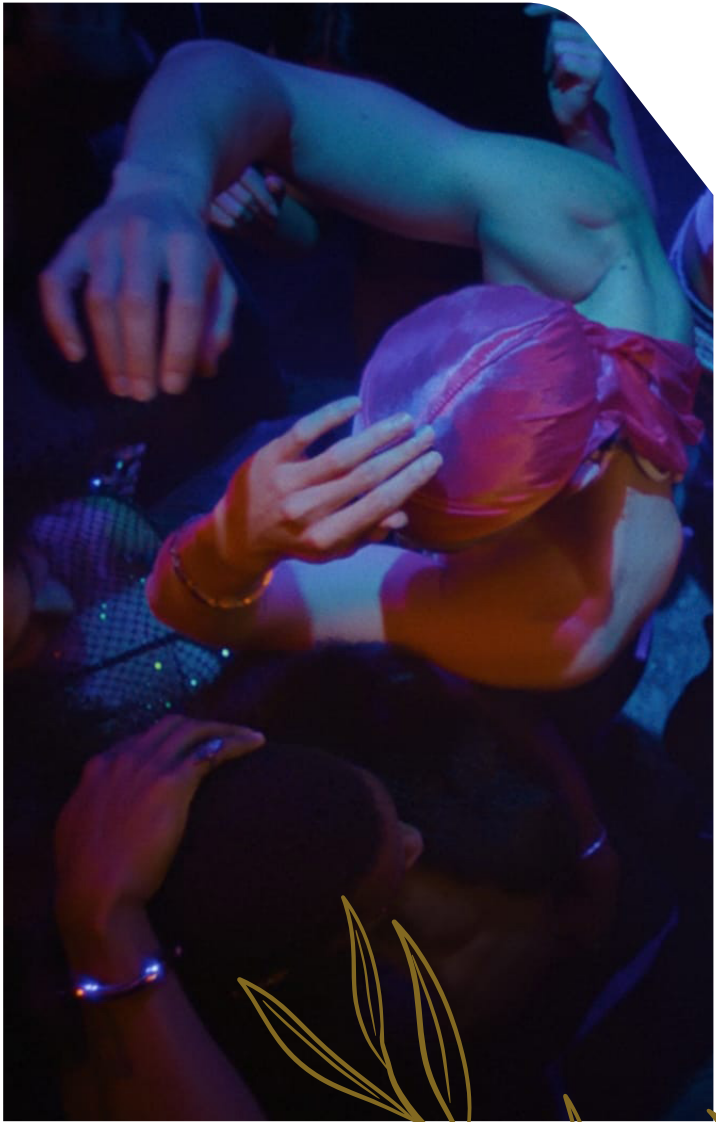
- Facilitating training pathways to encourage, support and track First Peoples who pursue careers in screen industry disciplines. We will give special emphasis to the participation of young people and First Peoples from regional areas.
- Assisting with the development of career pathways by creating mentoring relationships and providing or facilitating career advice.
- Establishing a database to track career progression of talent pipeline.
- Prioritising First Peoples when selecting participants to take up attachment and industry placement opportunities.
- Developing a First Peoples screen sector network providing skills development and knowledge sharing specifically for First Peoples. This will include physical and online gatherings (such as Fireside Yarns) and a dedicated communication portal.
- Encouraging greater networking with industry, by facilitating introductions and continuing to ensure First Peoples practitioners are invited to industry events.
- Investigating the feasibility of a physical hub dedicated to the development of First Peoples practitioners and First Peoples content in partnership with an appropriate organisation or institution.
- Advising and upskilling communities and practitioners on how to work with industry as First Peoples to ensure long, sustainable careers.
- Working across state borders with other screen agencies through the national First Nations Screen Alliance, to build programs and initiatives that provide development opportunities to our cohort of emerging and mid-career practitioners, in particular producer development initiatives.
- Supporting and facilitating non-First Peoples businesses to provide opportunities for First Peoples practitioners and implement culturally appropriate workplaces.

PRIORITY 3 GROW AUDIENCES

We will connect First Peoples content to national and international audiences by:

- Empowering local communities to access, celebrate and engage with First Peoples screen content and support the international promotion of First Peoples content.
- Supporting audience platforms.
- Growing partnerships with distributors, broadcasters and festivals (for example, Sovereign Shorts).

Top: *Queens To The Front*. Director Tammy Lee Rock. Photo Mary Gavrilidou. Bottom: *Elders*. Director Tony Briggs. Photo Moorina Bonini.



Left: *Kutcha's Koorioke*. Director John Harvey. Photo Anne Algar. Right: *Protest on the Dancefloor*. Director Talia Liddle. Photo Jesse Gohier-Fleet.

PRIORITY 4 BE BETTER

We will continue to change the way we do business to better serve the practices and needs of First Peoples screen practitioners by:

- Continuing to address 'access barriers' to VicScreen funding and activities and committing to ensuring First Peoples have a leading role in key decision-making.
- Seeking out and building partnerships with other agencies, screen industry businesses, private investors and philanthropists to support the development of First Peoples-led projects and/or the First Peoples screen sector.
- Enhancing data collection and management capabilities to more accurately measure progress and impact.
- Providing scaffolding for First Peoples accessing VicScreen programs, particularly skills development (attachments and industry placements) and project development – including tracking, proactive follow up, and provision of additional support where necessary.
- Providing guidance to the screen industry on protocols appropriate for use with Victorian First Peoples that will complement existing resources, like Screen Australia Pathways & Protocols: a filmmaker's guide to working with Indigenous people, culture and concepts.

MEASURING AND REPORTING

The implementation of the First Peoples Screen Strategy 2026–2030 will be the responsibility of every level and division at VicScreen, with First Peoples priorities embedded in our everyday work.

VicScreen will drive the First Peoples strategic priorities forward through the implementation of these Priorities and Strategies. We will measure the performance of the First Peoples Screen Strategy in two ways:

- 1. **Implementation:** develop an Action Plan and measures of success to track the Strategy’s progress.
- 2. **Outcomes:** assess the impact on First Peoples in, or aspiring to be in, Victoria’s screen industry.

We will share our baselines and targets once they have been set, and report on our progress and impact.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Self Determination

We are committed to ensuring First Peoples have a leading role in key decision-making, including in the setting of our strategic objectives, the design of our support programs and initiatives, and the assessment of applications.

The Victorian Government has reached an historic Treaty agreement with First Peoples of Victoria which will influence the way government does business in the future. We commit to abiding by the principles of the Treaty implementation when developing the way we do business.

Story Sovereignty

Story sovereignty refers to the right of a community or individual to control and share their own narratives, particularly in contexts where their stories have been historically marginalised or misrepresented. It emphasises the importance of First Peoples telling their own stories on their own terms, rather than having their narratives imposed or interpreted by others.

Equity Of Access And Cultural Safety

As outlined in the VicScreen Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Roadmap, we are committed to promoting and supporting equality, diversity and inclusiveness in the Victorian screen industry. We recognise that people have different circumstances and we work to identify and eliminate structural and systemic barriers that prevent full participation in our industry. We also work to ensure our support and services are provided in a culturally safe manner. We are committed to ensuring people are valued and respected, have access to opportunities and resources, and can operate at their best.

We will continuously work towards this commitment to create a successful screen industry where everyone sees a place for themselves.



Bush Boots. Directors Kynan Clarke and Isabel Dilena. Photo Kynan Clarke.



PROGRESS SO FAR

The VicScreen First Peoples Screen Strategy 2026–2030 was developed by the VicScreen First Peoples Working Group in response to insights gathered during the 2024–2025 Victorian First Peoples Screen Sector Consultations.

These consultations provided a valuable opportunity to identify both challenges and opportunities for advancing First Peoples’ careers and storytelling in the Victorian screen industry. The Working Group reviewed and refined the key findings into four strategic Priorities to guide future progress.

The VicScreen First Peoples Screen Strategy is grounded in a commitment to meaningful engagement, cultural integrity, and long-term investment in First Peoples-led storytelling. This Strategy builds upon a strong foundation of work already undertaken, guided by community voices, sector collaboration, and a growing presence of First Peoples leadership across screen culture. From the appointment of Tiriki Onus to the VicScreen Board and the commitment to an ongoing First Peoples Strategic Lead position, through to the development of targeted programs

such as the First Peoples Business Capability Grant, the First Peoples Participation & Capability Support program and the Sovereign Shorts documentary program, each initiative reflects a step toward a more inclusive and representative screen industry. This Strategy acknowledges the journey so far and sets the stage for a future shaped by First Peoples’ creativity, sovereignty, and self-determination.

Considerations

The screen industry operates within a commercial, predominantly market-driven, framework. Except for select special initiatives, Victorian Government support is insufficient to solely cover the high cost of production. Projects supported as part of this Strategy will be dependent on securing finance from a range of parties outside of VicScreen’s control. This is likely to include commercial arrangements with the marketplace, support from the Commonwealth Government and other agencies, and in some cases private investment and/or philanthropy.

This Roadmap was prepared by
VicScreen's First Peoples Working Group.

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