

## Queensland Film Festivals: mapping the state's festival landscape

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Funded project from CQUniversity

This proposed project intends to map the current state of local and regional film festivals in Queensland. This is intended as the first phase of a larger investigation into film festivals and/as cultural activity in the region. Film festivals are often considered in the context of their location, and can function as a catalyst for urban renewal and strengthen community cultural development, engagement and cultural tourism (Crespi-Valbona & Richards 2007: 106, Derrett 2000, 2003). Festivals, particularly those considered top tier (e.g. Cannes, Berlin), are often inherently linked with the city in which they are staged (Stringer 2001).

Film festivals can be considered as a 'bridge towards mainstream distribution, [yet] in Australia this result is not guaranteed' (Van Hemert & Ellison 2015, 41). While both the Melbourne International Film Festival and Sydney International Film Festival are considered internationally relevant, the situation in Queensland is less clear. The flagship festival of Brisbane, the Brisbane International Film Festival, has had a tumultuous history (Van Hemert 2013; 2015). While other festivals exist and receive state and federal funding, much of the state's festival activity is focused on the South East corner.

Despite this, the geographic size of Queensland and its significant regional areas have established a flourishing network of regional film festivals that are generating varying levels of festival hype and activity as well as providing support for emerging filmmakers.

Considering the thrust for tourism in Queensland and the importance of cultural tourism in some of these more remote areas (Derrett 2003), the film festival in a particular city / town such as Winton or Cairns, can play a significant role in developing and contributing to the local and regional culture of the area. As such, this project asks:

- What role do film festivals play in developing and nurturing local culture across Queensland, for both audiences and members of the film (and arts) industries?

### *Significance*

Queensland's film sector has seen uncertainty in the wake of major funding changes since the start of the decade (Van Hemert & Ellison 2015). Since our previous project in this field, the state's premier festival, Brisbane International Film Festival (BIFF), was renamed and reshaped in 2014 (becoming the Brisbane Asia-Pacific Film Festival), only to return to BIFF in 2017. The strengthening of local film hubs of activity, such as in Cairns, and the popularity of the Gold Coast for international film production, continues to challenge Brisbane as the locus for film activity in the region.

Queensland has been largely ignored in film festival research, with some exceptions (Van Hemert & Ellison 2015; Stevens 2016); however, other arts-based festivals have received some attention (Stadler et al's investigation of the Queensland Music Festival, for instance). There is an existing body of work on regional arts nationally and in Queensland (Radbourne et al 2010, Gair & Van Luyn 2017, Van Luyn & Klæbe 2014, and on film exhibition and consumption in rural Australia (Aveyard 2015). Elements of these works will be critical in grounding this investigation in regional arts models.

This project will include a specific investigation into the state's film festivals, which has yet to be comprehensively mapped. It will also develop a model for understanding the role of the festival in the development of local culture and consider the findings in relation to the challenges facing the film industry more broadly, such as distribution and digital trends. It is anticipated that the model will be able to be adapted across other sectors of the creative industries.

### *Project Activity*

The first phase of the project will include:

- **The creation of a database of all film festivals currently running (as of 2018) in Queensland, including dates, location, director, key funding bodies, and theme.**
- A desktop analysis of their programs, online presence, and media coverage
- Analysis and interpretation of these findings to establish key case studies
- The development of a Q1 journal article sharing these findings with the sector

The development of project phase 2 – a more in-depth investigation of key festivals as case studies, and the identification of stakeholders to target as interview participants.