

Three new ground-breaking dramas coming to screens with fresh collection of Digital Originals underway

- SBS, NITV and Screen Australia also announce five more short-form projects selected for further development.
- Applications now open for the fifth year of the successful initiative backing emerging under-represented creatives.
- Register for Digital Originals information webinar on 19 July.

9 July 2024

SBS, National Indigenous Television (NITV) and Screen Australia have announced three new Australian series coming to screens through the successful Digital Originals initiative, with production underway for *Moni* in NSW, *Moonbird* in Tasmania and *Warm Props* in Western Australia.

An ongoing partnership between SBS, NITV and Screen Australia, Digital Originals aims to develop exciting, innovative and risk-taking short-form drama projects to premiere on SBS On Demand, SBS VICELAND and NITV, from emerging screen creatives who are currently under-represented in the sector.



Behind the scenes of filming Moni with (L-R) 1st AD, Tin Pang, creator and writer Taofia Pelesasa, and director Alana Hicks.

In Pasifika led series ***Moni***, a gay Samoan man must reluctantly work out why his dead mother has unexpectedly plummeted from the heavens, and in doing so, learn to embrace his own truth. Led by creator, writer, and showrunner **Taofia Pelesasa**, director **Alana Hicks**, producer **Nicole Coventry** and executive producer **Eliorah Malifa** with Pelesasa Pics, the series explores identity, belonging and self-acceptance.



(L-R) Director, co-creator and co-writer, Nathan Maynard, co-creator, co-writer and producer Adam Thompson, and producer Catherine Pettman.

Moonbird is a co-production between the first-ever Tasmanian Aboriginal screen production company, Kutikina Productions, and Sheoak Films. Produced by **Catherine Pettman** and **Adam Thompson**, *Moonbird* explores the relationship between a recently sober father and his son who attempt to reconnect through a traditional muttonbirding season on a remote Tasmanian island. The compelling series is directed, co-created, and co-written by **Nathan Maynard**, and co-created and co-written by **Adam Thompson**.



Warm Props filming in WA last week with creator, director, and writer, Jub Clerc.

Warm Props takes audiences behind the scenes with Charlie, who returns to a chaotic film shoot in her hometown in Western Australia and must then face her past as her narcissistic boss threatens the stability of her career and personal life. The heartening series is brought to life by creator and writer **Jub Clerc**, co-writer **Kimberly Benjamin**, directed by Clerc and Benjamin, and produced by **Jodie Bell** for Ramu Productions.

Commissioning Editor, SBS Scripted, Nakul Legha, said: "We're proud to be commissioning and developing such bold and ambitious scripted series that continue to raise the bar for Australian storytelling. The Digital Originals initiative consistently delivers award-winning, creatively brilliant series that have launched the careers of Australia's most talented emerging and under-represented voices. We can't wait for audiences to fall in love with *Moni*, *Moonbird* and *Warm Props*. And we're thrilled to back the next wave of creatives in bringing their fresh and exciting stories to the screen."

NITV Acting Head of Indigenous Commissioning and Production, Adam Manovic, added: "Digital Originals provides a unique platform for emerging First Nations creatives to showcase their innovation and share their stories. With incredible talent shining through in this latest



announcement of commissions and development projects, we're excited to see what new stories and voices will come through as applications open for 2024."

Screen Australia Head of Online and Games, Lee Naimo, said: "Digital Originals is a flagship partnership that supports emerging creatives. It gives teams the tools to create online projects of scale in a way that isn't seen anywhere else in the world and has uncovered talent from across Australia who have gone on to work on ground-breaking dramas. The pitches for the latest cohort were particularly impressive, and it's so encouraging to see these teams take on board feedback during the workshop and apply it to their projects as they move forward."

Head of Screen NSW, Kyas Hepworth, said: "Digital Originals is such a fantastic platform for under-represented voices and Screen NSW is excited to support *Moni* and the entire team. This project is a great example of the new wave of fresh and authentic voices coming from Western Sydney and I can't wait to see the series come to life."

Executive Manager of Screen Tasmania, Alex Sangston, said: "We have been working with the *Moonbird* team since the project's inception and we're thrilled to see it come to fruition. It is invaluable that palawa people can share their stories, cultural heritage and practices, and we're proud to support that. Congratulations to Nathan Maynard, Adam Thompson, Catherine Pettman, Kutikina Productions and Sheoak Films on bringing a powerful and vital story the screen."

CEO of Screenwest, Rikki Lea Bestall, said: "It's wonderful to see another Western Australian series produced through this fantastic initiative, which enables talent to hone their creative voices and deliver innovative, contemporary scripted projects. We're proud to be supporting this unique First Nations story – congratulations to Jub, Jodie, Kimba and the incredible cast and crew who brought this series to life in WA's beautiful Kimberley region. We look forward to seeing *Warm Props* hit SBS and NITV soon!"

Loani Arman is Executive Producer for SBS on *Moni*, *Moonbird* and *Warm Props*, and has been working with and mentoring teams during the development and production of the projects.

As the Digital Originals initiative enters its fifth year, five projects have also been selected for further development from the 10 shortlisted teams who took part in an exclusive workshop hosted by Screen Australia, SBS and NITV in December 2023. Up to three will later be chosen for production funding and commissioning. The creative teams, and their projects, selected for further development, are:

***Boundary's End* (QLD)**

Two Blak Queens living in Meanjin's West End are thrust into the unknown when their landlord dabbles in witchcraft, sending the young women on a quest to unblur the lines between fantasy and reality.



Writer/Directors: Miriam Dynevor and Makisha Broome

DisMISSable (VIC)

Disabled activist Alana has always hated her family's obsession with the local Miss Sultanah Beauty Pageant, but her able-bodied sister Nicky would do anything to save it... So when its financial backing is cut and Nicky makes it 'disabled-only' in a secret ploy for diversity funding, Alana enters to burn down this supposed family legacy once and for all.

Producer: Hannah Ngo (Lazy Susan Films)

Writers: Artemis Munoz and Rhian Wilson Ruge

Director: Alistair Baldwin

Fish Boi (NSW)

A disgraced sneaker hustler takes the leap to save his parents' bankrupt Filipino mini-mart to reclaim his family's respect - by going all-in on setting up the biggest underground fish delivery hustle in Western Sydney.

Producers: Robertino Zambrano, Dulce Aguilar, Gabrielle Joosten (KAPWA Studioworks)

Writer/Director: Robertino Zambrano

Lingered (NSW)

When trans man Darcy returns to his regional hometown to help his estranged mother Nora, he discovers that someone unexpected from his past has been living in his family home since the day he left.

Producer: Cyna Strachan,

Executive Producer: Liam Heyen (Mad Ones Films)

Writer: AP Pobjoy

Little Korea (QLD)

Two migrant Korean women spiral out of control when they become locked into a battle between their restaurants.

Producer: Lark Lee (Lark Films)

Writers/Directors: Lark Lee and Katrina Irawati Graham

The announcement of this latest wave of Digital Originals comes as applications open for another round of the initiative for 2024 from today. **Applications are open until 5pm AEST, Thursday 15 August 2024, and can be made with Screen Australia, [here](#).** To read the full guidelines, click [here](#).

Screen Australia, SBS and NITV will also host a **Digital Originals information webinar on 19 July**. Applicants are encouraged to attend and hear from SBS Scripted Commissioning Editor, Nakul Legha, Acting Head of Indigenous Commissioning and Production at NITV, Adam Manovic, and Screen Australia Head of Online and Games, Lee Naimo, about the history of



Digital Originals and what Screen Australia, SBS and NITV are looking for in this current round, followed by a Q&A.

- Date: Friday 19 July 2024
- Time: 10 – 11am AEST
- Register: Click [here](#)
- Accessibility: An Auslan interpreter will be made available for the webinar. If you would like to discuss this or other accessibility requirements, please contact Online@screenaustralia.gov.au or call 1800 507 901.
- A recording of this webinar will be made available on the Screen Australia website soon after.

The Digital Originals initiative was created to elevate talent historically under-represented in the sector, including people who identify as culturally and linguistically diverse, First Nations Australians, people with disability, female and gender diverse, LGBTQIA+; and those who are located in regional and remote areas. It continues to prove itself as an effective pathway for creators to advance their skills, and as a launch-pad for their projects to attract local interest and break into international markets.

Most recently, *Night Bloomers* premiered in October 2023, with creator Andrew Uni Lee winning an Australian Writers' Guild Award for Best Web Series. That followed *Appetite* in April 2023 which was selected as one of 10 series in the Short Form Competition at Canneseries 2023, and was also nominated for a Rose d'Or. *Latecomers* premiered in December 2022 and won the 2024 AACTA Award for Best Online Drama or Comedy, and was also featured in the Short Forms Competition at Series Mania in 2023.

Alumni of Digital Originals have also gone on to take on key creative roles across SBS Original drama series and elsewhere in the industry, including Mohini Herse (*Appetite*) who is set-up Director for the upcoming SBS Original *Four Years Later*, producer Liam Heyen (*Latecomers*, *Erotic Stories*), director Madeleine Gottlieb (*Latecomers*, *Erotic Stories*), Stevie Cruz-Martin (*The Tailings*, *Safe Home*), as well as Corrie Chen and Michelle Law (*Homecoming Queens*), and Dylan River (*Robbie Hood*).

More information about Digital Originals is available [here](#). The initiative is one of the many delivered by SBS designed to improve inclusion in the screen industry. Read more about this work [here](#).

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Notes to Editors:

More details and production images for the three Digital Originals commissioned by SBS, NITV and Screen Australia:

Moni

Moni is a beautiful Pasifika project from Pelesasa Pics, led by creator Taofia Pelesasa, director Alana Hicks, producer Nicole Coventry, and executive producer Eliorah Malifa. Moni, a 30-something gay Samoan man, is haunted by the re-emergence of a deep secret he has harboured from his childhood. On return to his family and his hometown of Western Sydney he is confronted with the cultural and community pressures he had escaped from - making his journey to healing a difficult one. But guidance comes in the unlikeliest way and from the unlikeliest place - his dead Samoan mother.

Principal production funding from Screen Australia in association with SBS, with support from Screen NSW. Developed with assistance of Screen Australia and SBS.

Please see images from production [here](#).

Moonbird

Palawa creatives, Nathan Maynard and Adam Thompson, lead with their company Kutikina Productions: the first-ever Tasmanian Aboriginal screen production company. *Moonbird* is a co-production between Kutikina Productions and Sheoak Films. Maynard (director and writer) and Thompson (writer and producer) are joined by Catherine Pettman (producer) as creatives on this project. Set on a remote Tasmanian island, a recently sober father tries to reconnect with his son through a traditional muttonbirding season, only to face cultural and personal crises that threaten their relationship and force them to confront their family's disturbing history.

Principal production funding from Screen Australia in association with SBS, with support from Screen Tasmania. Developed with assistance of Screen Australia and SBS.

Please see images from production [here](#).

Warm Props

Warm Props is an upbeat and biting series created by Jub Clerc, co-written by Kimberley Benjamin, directed by Clerc and Benjamin, and produced by Jodie Bell for Ramu Productions. Caught between set life and home life, Charlie Flogim is thrust back to her remote hometown of Broome where she is forced to deal with a chaotic film shoot and face the one person she vowed never to see again. Will her narcissistic boss convince her that her career is more



important than family? Or will Charlie see what truly matters and fight for what's right? All this before the Warm Props take off at the turning of the tides.

Principal production funding from Screen Australia in association with SBS, with support from Screenwest and Lotterywest. Developed with assistance of Screen Australia and SBS.

Please see images from production [here](#).



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