



CAREER BRIEF – FILM & TV PRODUCTION MANAGER / PRODUCER

What this role actually is

Film and television producers and production managers help turn a concept or script into a finished screen production. Although the roles overlap, their scope is different.

A **producer** may be involved from the earliest development of an idea through financing, production, post-production, marketing, distribution and the management of investor or legal obligations.

A **production manager** normally joins once a project is funded or approaching production. They manage the practical delivery of the shoot, including people, equipment, logistics, documentation, schedules and day-to-day operations.

In practice: Annie describes the production manager as similar to a project manager. The producer may remain involved for years, while the production manager concentrates on the preparation and filming period and then hands the project to post-production.

Typical activities include:

- recruiting and contracting crew
- coordinating production departments
- helping manage budgets and expenditure
- negotiating equipment and supplier arrangements
- organising locations, transport, accommodation and facilities
- monitoring preparation against the shooting schedule
- managing the production office
- coordinating information between crew, producers and financiers
- overseeing call sheets, reports and production records
- troubleshooting delays, illness, weather and availability problems

Where this role typically works

Production managers and producers may work across:

- feature films
- television and streaming series
- documentaries
- television commercials
- online and digital productions
- independent or low-budget projects
- studio-based and location productions
- production companies, broadcasters and screen agencies

Most work is concentrated around established production centres. In Australia, these include Sydney, Melbourne, South-East Queensland and other locations where productions receive government support or require specific landscapes, facilities or regional stories.

What the work involves: real tasks and realities

Preparing the production

Production management work begins well before filming. Scripts must be broken down, scheduled and costed. Departments then develop their plans for locations, sets, costumes, equipment, casting, safety and logistics.

Preparation can include:

- identifying suitable crew
- reviewing department requirements
- checking whether creative plans fit the budget

- negotiating camera, lighting and grip equipment
- coordinating location inspections
- arranging actor travel and availability
- organising camera, costume and makeup tests
- checking construction and set completion
- running schedule and production meetings

During filming

Once filming begins, the work becomes more repetitive in structure but not necessarily easier. Each day generates information that must be communicated, checked and reported.

The less visible work

Production management involves substantial administration. This can include contracts, insurance information, approvals, crew records, purchase documentation, schedules, reports and hundreds of daily communications.

Hours, pressure and lifestyle

The work is usually project-based and may involve:

- long or irregular days
- early starts and changing locations
- intense deadlines
- periods away from home
- responsibility for expensive resources
- concentrated work followed by gaps between contracts

Skills that matter in practice

Technical and operational skills

- production scheduling
- budgeting and cost control
- crew and supplier coordination
- contract and production documentation
- screen-industry terminology and workflows
- workplace health and safety awareness
- location and transport logistics
- digital production-management systems
- understanding the responsibilities of different departments

Transferable skills

- project management
- administration and document control
- negotiation
- stakeholder communication
- procurement
- scheduling
- problem-solving
- team coordination
- financial organisation
- risk management

People may enter screen production from construction, events, administration, logistics, accounting, hospitality or other project-based sectors. However, they still need to learn screen-specific processes and workplace expectations.

Often underestimated

- prioritising under constant interruption
- staying calm when plans change
- communicating clearly and quickly
- knowing when to escalate a problem
- maintaining accuracy under time pressure
- reading team dynamics
- accepting direct feedback
- building and maintaining professional relationships
- managing a freelance career as a business

In practice: Annie considers attitude, curiosity, reliability and willingness to learn at least as important as technical ability when assessing emerging crew. She also stresses that one person failing to complete their work can affect the entire production.

Pathways into the role

There is no single mandatory pathway. Production managers generally build experience through progressively more responsible production-office roles.

A common pathway may be:

Production runner or assistant → production secretary → assistant production coordinator → production coordinator → production manager → line producer → producer

Entry routes can include:

- a Certificate III, Diploma or degree in screen and media (see more details below)
- short industry-onboarding courses
- production attachments or paid placements
- student and independent productions
- entry-level production-office or set roles
- transferring from project management, events, logistics, finance or administration
- professional development through screen guilds and industry organisations

Education can introduce industry processes and provide practical projects, but employability usually also depends on credits, workplace experience, relationships, reliability and evidence that the person can operate in a professional production environment.

The Vocational Pathway (VET)

- Best For: Practical learners wanting fast, technical skills.
- Qualifications: Diploma or Advanced Diploma of Screen and Media.
- How it works: Students spend 1–2 years in hands-on environments learning production software, scheduling tools, and onset protocols.
- The Route to Producer: Graduates usually enter the production office as Production Coordinators, handling paperwork and logistics before stepping up to management.

The Higher Education Pathway (University)

- Best For: Creative strategists wanting deep business, legal, and narrative training.
- Qualifications: Bachelor of Film Production, Bachelor of Creative Arts, or business double-degrees.
- How it works: A 3-year program combining film theory, creative storytelling, and screen business (copyright, funding, distribution).
- The Route to Producer: Graduates build a portfolio of short films where they act as the Producer. They leverage university networks to pitch to funding bodies like Screen Queensland or Screen Australia, often stepping straight into Independent Producer roles.

Labour market reality

Demand level

Australia recorded **\$2.7 billion in drama-production expenditure during 2024–25**, a 43% increase on the previous year. However, the increase was strongly influenced by high-budget and international projects. Australian productions represented 40% of total expenditure, and some television and video-on-demand measures declined. This indicates substantial activity but not uniformly stable demand across every production type or occupation.

Competitiveness

Entry is competitive because:

- many roles are filled through established professional networks
- employers often prefer people with prior credits
- junior applicants may compete for a limited number of attachments
- productions need crew who can become effective quickly
- work is commonly offered directly rather than advertised through mainstream job boards

Where opportunities are more available

Opportunities are generally stronger in:

- major production hubs
- areas near studios and recurring production activity
- regions attracting funded productions
- departments experiencing local crew shortages
- commercial, digital and unscripted production alongside drama

They may be less available in regions without regular production activity or for applicants unwilling to travel.

Constraints and attrition risks

The screen sector is cyclical. High national expenditure does not guarantee continuous employment for individual workers. Productions begin and end, projects may be delayed or cancelled, and overseas activity can shift in response to financing, incentives, exchange rates and production schedules.

Common reasons people may leave include:

- inconsistent income
- difficulty managing gaps between contracts
- long working hours
- family or caring responsibilities
- burnout
- limited advancement without relocation or networking
- the physical and psychological demands of production periods

Jobs and Skills Australia groups several screen occupations together, so broad employment figures should not be treated as a precise forecast for production managers. Its wider Film, Television, Radio and Stage Directors group records 17,400 workers, 22% working part time and annual employment growth of 800, but it includes multiple occupations beyond production management.

Possible progression includes:

- senior production coordinator
- production manager
- unit production manager
- line producer
- executive in charge of production
- producer or executive producer
- production-company management
- studio or broadcaster production roles

Progression is not automatic. Workers usually need increasingly complex credits, trusted relationships, evidence of budget responsibility and experience managing larger teams.

This role may suit you if:

- you enjoy organising complex projects
- you can hold both detail and the wider objective in mind
- you make decisions without becoming reckless
- you communicate clearly under pressure
- you are comfortable coordinating different personalities
- you can tolerate changing plans
- you enjoy fast, project-based work
- you take responsibility without needing continuous praise
- you are willing to build professional relationships
- you can manage periods of intense work and uncertain income
- you find satisfaction in contributing to a shared creative result

This role may NOT suit you if:

- you require predictable hours and continuous employment
- you strongly dislike administration
- you struggle to prioritise competing requests
- you become overwhelmed by frequent interruptions
- you avoid direct or time-sensitive conversations
- you need substantial time to make routine operational decisions
- you are unwilling to travel or work outside standard hours
- you expect early access to senior creative authority
- you dislike networking or maintaining professional contacts
- you find blunt feedback difficult to separate from personal criticism

Sources and reliability

This brief is based on:

- **practitioner insights from the Work Uncovered podcast transcript**, reflecting Annie's experience across Australian television commercials, film and television
- **general Australian labour-market and career-pathway information** from Screen Australia, Jobs and Skills Australia, Screen Queensland and TAFE Queensland

Practitioner comments provide valuable first-hand insight but should not be treated as universal evidence. National occupational data is also imperfect because producers, production managers, directors and related screen workers may be grouped under broad classifications.

Currency statement

Information is current as of July 2026.

Limitations

Responsibilities, working hours, pay arrangements, entry requirements and career progression vary according to:

- employer and production company
- production size and budget
- film, television, commercial or digital format
- location
- department
- union or enterprise arrangements
- employment status
- individual experience and professional reputation

Next steps for exploration

- Watch the complete credits of several Australian productions and identify unfamiliar departments.
- Compare production-office roles with other departments before choosing a pathway.
- Review current Screen Queensland, Screen Australia, Screenworks, AFTRS and TAFE opportunities.
- Join or follow the relevant professional guild or association.
- Attend industry events with specific questions rather than simply asking for “a job in film”.
- Seek an attachment, assistant role, short production or supervised practical project.
- Speak with several practitioners, including an early-career worker, before committing to study.
- Prepare financially for gaps between contracts.

Links

Australian Cinematographers Society (ACE) - <https://cinematographer.org.au/>

Australian Production Design Guild (APDG) - <https://apdg.org.au/>

Screen Queensland - <https://screenqueensland.com.au/>

Screenworks - <https://screenworks.com.au/>

The Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AACTA) - <https://www.aacta.org/>

Screen Careers - <https://screencareers.com.au/>

TAFE Queensland Screen Onboarding Program - <https://tafeqld.edu.au/course/19/19393/screen-onboarding-program>

More career exploration resources at curatedcareers.com.au