

President's Report - AGM 2026

Christian Gower - 26 August 2026

Writing this final President's report is a bittersweet moment. There's a lot of work that the Guild has done over the last two years that I'm incredibly proud of, but I can't help but think about how much there still is for us all to do as an industry.

Within the Guild we have undertaken a lot of work to mature as an organisation: new processes to systemise our decision-making, new approaches to engaging with the rest of the industry, and new strategies to connect with our crew. The Guild continues to be powered by a team of passionate volunteers who are second only to the staff and contractors that live the Guild's work every single day - Kelly, Tracey, Tania, Annette, Daniel and so many more people who contribute to our mission to make Aotearoa's screen industry the best place for crew to work. I'm incredibly grateful for each and every one of them for the support they've given me over the last two years, and for the contributions they've made to the Guild and the lives of every crew member in our industry.

Now more than ever I believe that our industry needs to make some serious changes. Here's my two cents:

ScreenSafe needs to be an industry-wide organisation that is backed by every Guild, production, funding body and government department. Nothing is more important than the health and safety of our people, and yet the Screen Guild has borne the responsibility of managing our only industry-wide safety body. This cannot continue. The Guild has undertaken work to make ScreenSafe an independent organisation, and thanks to funding from NZ On Air and NZ Film Commission we will be piloting a programme to provide free counselling sessions for screen workers. Every part of the industry needs to come together to support this - quite frankly you cannot claim to care about the screen industry if you don't support ScreenSafe.

Those who have delayed the full implementation of the Screen Industry Workers Act need to take it more seriously. I am personally disappointed by the lack of significance that SPADA has placed on this issue, including the lack of education provided to producers around their responsibilities under SIWA. SPADA has also delayed their registration as an engager organisation for years, which means that crew have had to face unnecessary uncertainty and inconsistency around contracts. Yes, the last few years have been hard on our industry, but implementing SIWA should have been prioritised and it wasn't. Our industry is worse off for it, and I believe that the uncertainty around SIWA is a component that is causing overseas productions to be wary about coming to New Zealand.

We also need to get serious about international-grade screen infrastructure. Retrofitted factory sheds and "studios" with two small stages and a carpark are not going to bring marque productions here. Lots of good intention and effort has gone into expanding our infrastructure a couple of stages at a time (which is certainly commendable), but our industry needs a strategy for proper large-scale infrastructure if we're going to attract more than a couple of big productions each year. I've been banging my head against this issue for years, and honestly I don't sense any urgency from local or central government to resolve this. Our entire production pipeline is constrained by insufficient infrastructure - the feast and famine that we all experience comes down to this more than we realise. There are a few people trying to build proper studios privately, and only time will tell whether they get over the line.

Crew development is the next pillar that holds this whole industry up, and it's great to see NZ On Air partnering with Netflix to fund Kahurangi Toi Ātea - a practical training ground to bring new crew into our industry. Our industry should be leading our own crew development, because the truth is that this kind of education provides far more value than most film schools and tertiary providers (at a fraction of the cost in a fraction of the time). We need more crew and more opportunities for crew to up-skill.

I need to be brutally honest: if we don't get this right over the next few years I see our industry spiralling into a complete collapse. Our industry has incredible potential, but realising that potential requires hard work and hard conversations. This is not a time to be complacent or naive about how seriously we will be affected if we do not fix these very real issues. If you care about this industry - bloody hell, if you care about your own self-interests or your own pocket - then get involved in the conversation; join the Guild, Society, Union or Association that speaks to your issues, learn what problems we're all trying to overcome and find a way to contribute to the solutions we all need. All of your mates at work are relying on you to pitch in.

Christian Gower

Screen Guild President 2024-2026