

# Que Minh Luu

## Director of Content, Netflix

**Belyndy Rowe**, Senior Associate, Bird & Bird, sits down with **Que Minh Luu** to discuss her career and thoughts on International Women's Day. Que Minh Luu is the Director of Content at Netflix. She oversees original content commissioning, licensing and acquisitions, programming and strategy for ANZ. She is behind such iconic shows as *Boy Swallows Universe*. Prior to Netflix, Que was an EP for Drama, Comedy & Indigenous programming at the ABC, and prior to that was at Matchbox.

**BELYNDY ROWE:** Thanks for speaking with us. Can you tell me about your career path and how it led you to where you are today?

**QUE MINH LUU:** I was obsessed with television and film as a kid, and with a couple of VCRs and a helpful friend I managed to record and watch almost every Australian show or film that came out over a period. I did a media degree, much to my mother's chagrin. Despite zero connections to the industry and a desire to write, I eventually landed on editing – so I could at least tell her I was working with computers. Eventually, I got an assistant editor's role on an ABC show and progressed to editing for children's shows, documentaries, factual content, and finally scripted drama. After years of that I realised that I wanted to get myself to the start of a project rather than the end, so I quit editing, moved sideways and all the way back to the start of the writing process, as a notetaker for writers' rooms, then managing and coordinating the development slate at Matchbox Pictures. I co-created a show, and then got hired at the ABC as an executive producer in their scripted team. Then Netflix slid into my LinkedIn DMs and here we are!

**BELYNDY:** Over the past few years, have you noticed any major or dramatic shifts in the Australian entertainment landscape and if so, how has it affected you?

**QUE:** The biggest shift has been the advent and growth of streaming (of course!) which has greatly increased the opportunity for Australian storytelling at home and abroad. Contributing to the local ecosystem through broadening the overall local commissioning scope, and supporting creatives with simplified and streamlined financing and distribution to a global audience is how we can help to keep our homegrown talent here.

**BELYNDY:** What energises you about work?

**QUE:** I went from being fully focused on each individual project, to the broader vision of a slate, and now I feel excited about digging even further into how we can connect with audiences. Since joining Netflix, it's not just about who they are, but also how many of them there are. After all, what is representation without awareness of who we're representing and to whom?

I'm excited about the opportunity to build something that endures and is a space for others to have a go, to set a vision for themselves, to build their own team and to try to make Australian stories for Netflix. I find myself thinking not just about the shows themselves, but the systems, structures and frameworks in which they're made. What's our succession plan for the next generation? How can we empower creativity and ensure that they stay connected to the audience? I'm energised by making these big bets where

the information available to you is there purely to support what you know innately as an Australian. It helps you understand and interpret what your gut is telling you about whether a show is going to work. I'm excited about making that impact as big as possible. Ultimately I want to make myself obsolete; if I do my job well, I'm no longer needed. That idea is really cool.

I'm also energised by the idea of making broad, highly commercial shows and finding ways to connect or unify an incredibly diverse audience with one story. We're not saving lives or sending anyone into space, but if we can connect with people, make them feel something and connect them to each other in this day and age, that is really cool.

**BELYNDY:** What is the greatest risk you've taken as a professional?

**QUE:** The greatest risk for me personally was deciding to leave my senior role as an editor and start from scratch in a different part of the industry by moving into development, just after having a baby. Regarding the work itself, each show we produce for Netflix presents its own unique risk. We're engaged in the delicate task of building credibility with our audience concerning the type of Australian shows they can expect from us. The stakes are high because credibility is crucial to us. This means our primary focus is to make these shows as good as possible. We're taking a financial risk and a creative risk, and we're risking our credibility.

**BELYNDY:** Please tell me about a woman in your industry who inspires you, and why?

**QUE:** I'll give you more than one! My last few bosses are all brilliant women. The first one is Debbie Lee, a leader in the screen sector, running scripted for Matchbox Pictures. She is a good human, principled, kind and generous, and backs talent hard. When I made the switch from editing she helped me break into development, brought me in through the door at Matchbox – before there was even a real role for me to take on – until I became part of the furniture.

Sally Riley forged a path for First Nations storytelling and ideas at the ABC before she became head of all scripted drama and comedy. There'd be no *Redfern Now* or *Mystery Road* without her. She's a groundbreaker, builder, and fighter who's willing to take risks – she hired me into her team when I didn't have the traditional experience on paper and took the time to mentor and guide me as well as many others. She's the reason I work in commissioning.

My boss at Netflix is Minyong Kim, the VP of content for APAC (excl. India). She is quietly formidable and brilliant both in the business



and creative sense, demands excellence from her team but always shows up to help us get there. Her leadership is what propelled Korea into the market it is for Netflix today (she commissioned *Squid Game*!) – that's the north star for what we want to achieve for ANZ.

And while she's not my boss, isn't she kind of the boss of us all? Deb Richards, brilliant colleague and the MVP of the Australian Netflix team. She inspires with her confidence, ease, and style of building relationships and influencing to advocate for the needs of our industry and get stuff done. Her signature globe-trotting hustle to get things done is unflappable with a grounded charisma and sense of fun, all the while moonlighting as a marriage celebrant and taking VCs from the road. A class act in bringing people together.

**BELYNDY:** The 2024 International Women's Day campaign theme is 'Inspire Inclusion'. What does this mean to you and how would you like to see it applied in your industry?

**QUE:** Inclusion has been a major theme in my entire career, the last ten or so years have supercharged it as a core focus in the industry. Inspiring inclusion I hope is followed up with a call to action, one being continuing to deepen the understanding and commitment to applying the level of thought, care and work required for meaningful change, understanding that it's fundamentally about building opportunity. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to inclusion. It's a mindset rather than a series of increasingly complex rules that can sometimes inadvertently lead to the very kind of exclusion we're trying to address. Forgiveness and compassion are also parts of inspiring inclusion, in that mistakes will always happen on the path to getting it right, so I'm down with reinstating "points for trying".

**BELYNDY:** What do you want to achieve next?

**QUE:** I'm pretty happy where I am as long as I'm able to build something for the long term. We want to follow up the success of *Boy Swallows Universe* with more big bet shows and continue to build the credibility and impact of Australian stories on Netflix. If we can do for Australian content what our team in Korea did with *Squid Game*, I might go on a little holiday as a treat.