

**FILM FRIENDLY
WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

UNDERSTANDING LOCATION FILMING

screenwest

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UNDERSTANDING LOCATION FILMING

Location filming occurs in a real-life setting instead of in a studio. The location can be either interior (inside) or exterior (outside).

Location filming tends to fall into one of the following types of activity:

- television commercials (TVCs)
- web, app or online-based advertising
- television series and serials
- feature films
- short films
- documentaries
- reality television.

We define 'location' as any area referred to as the set or production space. It includes all areas occupied by people directly connected to the production. It includes parking, traffic control and crew facilities such as catering or designated smoking areas.

FEATURE FILMS

Usually between 90 to 120 minutes long. The filming of feature film may seem slow. This is because of the equipment needed to achieve the 'look' of the film and the complexity involved in getting everything to be just right.

A typical feature film:

- **Number of People:** Between 30 and 100+ crew members.
- **Time Frame:** A film's budget heavily influences its timeline. Some films have a 6 to 8 week pre-production period and take 6 to 12 weeks to film. Films with large budgets and complex script requirements may have a longer pre-production and shoot period.
- **Location Requirements:** Feature films, particularly the larger productions, often have a main crew and a 'second unit'. On location needs:
 - a unit base
 - specialist equipment
 - truck parking
 - infrastructure
 - traffic management.



TELEVISION SERIES

Generally consisting of 2,4,6, 8 or 10 episodes. Some series may go up to 26 episodes- although this is becoming rare. TV episodes will be 30 or 60-minutes duration per episode including advertisement breaks.

A typical TV Series:

- **Number of People:** Between 50 and 80 crew members. Depending on the budget, this could be up to 100-200 people.
- **Time Frame:** A series can take from 6 weeks to 6 months to film, depending upon its complexity. A serial is a longer-running series, like Neighbours or Home and Away. These tend to film for 8 to 10 months of the year.
- **Location Requirements:** The same locations repeatedly feature, for example, the homes of lead characters or their place of work, where multiple scenes across multiple episodes occur. This may require the production to return to the same location many times throughout a season's filming.
On location needs:
 - a unit base
 - parking for trucks
 - specialist equipment,
 - infrastructure and
 - traffic management.

Television productions may involve a 'second unit' and the main crew. The second unit is usually engaged to capture simpler shots that do not always require cast and large specialist equipment 'set-ups'.



DOCUMENTARIES

Western Australia has a thriving documentary industry.

A typical documentary:

- **Number of People:** less than 10 people (on set).
- **Time Frame:** the subject matter determines the filming timeframe. Typically it's between 2 and 6 months to film. More complex documentary series, like a David Attenborough nature series, can take up to two years to complete.
- **Location requirements:** documentaries generally have little impact on locations. They require parking, use very little equipment and do not stay in the same place for very long. As documentaries are often observational, they generally don't interfere with other activities occurring around them, such as pedestrian access.

TELEVISION COMMERCIALS

Adverts are regularly filmed in Western Australia. They are usually between 10 and 90 seconds long.

A typical commercial:

- **Number of People:** between 10 and 80 people.
- **Time Frame:** varies depending on the length of the commercial, complexity of the shots needed, and the amount of people and equipment involved. A 30 second TVC is generally filmed over 2 to 3 days.
- **Location Requirements:** Multiple locations are frequently used. Each may appear on screen for a few seconds. On location needs:
 - parking,
 - traffic management,
 - unit base setup and
 - specialty filming equipment.

Some form of 'set dressing' is usually involved to adjust the look of the location to suit the needs of the commercial e.g. removal of street furniture or signage.

WEB, APP OR ONLINE-BASED ADVERTISING

Crew sizes for this type of filming are generally the same as documentary crews, with minimal equipment and low impact on their surroundings. These kinds of productions may have a very short production timeframe and a small budget. There is often less than a week to prepare for the shoot, film on location, edit the project and be ready for broadcast.



SHORT FILMS

Making a short film is an important learning experience for filmmakers. Short films are often small, low budget, low impact productions made by less experienced crew members.

The team may not be as familiar with filming protocols and need more interaction with local authorities when planning their shoot. Always encourage the team to take a pragmatic and professional approach to filming.

A typical short film:

- **Number of People:** up to 10 people.
- **Time Frame:** up to 5 days, depending on the film's complexity and crew availability. Filming days may be spread across a long period rather than in a block of time.
- **Location Requirements:** do not usually require much parking, traffic management or infrastructure.

UNIT BASE

The unit base is the hub of a production. This is where:

- unit, makeup, wardrobe, and catering trucks, are parked
- meals are served
- cast greenrooms/trailers are parked and
- crew and cast members gather when they are not required on set.

The area generally includes portable pop-up marquees, tables, chairs, bins, trolleys, tea and coffee facilities, food warmers, and hand-washing facilities.

The best place for a unit base is in an area with the least impact on residents and the public. This is often a park, reserve or dedicated car park, away from public thoroughfares and areas of day-to-day activity. It should also be in an area that allows the crew to move easily between the base and the filming location. Ideally on foot, otherwise buses are required to move cast and crew.

Equipment vehicles owned by crew may park at the unit base overnight so that residents are not inconvenienced by trucks arriving early in the morning. This will generally require additional security.

ACTIVITIES ON LOCATION

A standard workday in film and television is usually 10 hours plus a 45 min lunch break. Crews often early arrive at a location to set up so filming can begin as soon as there is enough natural light.

The first to arrive and the last to leave the production base (unit base) or set are usually the caterers, unit, hair, makeup, and wardrobe personnel and the associated trucks, marquees, and portable toilets. Much of the early activity requires generators for power.

Film production companies usually provide their own catering to ensure that cast and crew can eat at regular intervals and minimise time away from the set.

During the approval process the local authority's Film Liaison Officer should check exactly what will be on site at the unit base. Sometimes producers will ask for access to facilities like public toilets and shelters or contact details of privately owned facilities.

Trucks with equipment integral to the filming process e.g. camera, grip, lighting, generator, sound and props are known as essential vehicles.

Essential vehicles need parking as close to filming as possible, so equipment can be accessed regularly throughout the day. When filming is over for the day, all equipment from the location is returned to the essential vehicles.

All signs of activity are removed from the location unless the crew returns the following day, in which case trucks and equipment often remain on site with security personnel in place.