

PRIME'S POTENTIAL BREACH APPROVED

The ABA has given the Prime network permission for a potential breach of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* to allow it to bid for the Seven network television licences.

If Prime is successful in its bid for Seven, it will be in breach of the 75 per cent audience reach limits of the Act. This breach has been approved for a maximum of 12 months from the transaction date.

Under the Act, a person must not be in a position to exercise control of commercial television broadcasting licences where total licence area population exceeds 75

per cent of the population of Australia. Prime has given the ABA an undertaking to remedy the breach within the 12 month period.

Prime requested approval of the temporary breach with the aim of:

- merging the commercial interests of Prime and its program supplier (the Seven network), thereby acquiring a significant voice in Prime's own future; and
- becoming an organisation which will be able to operate in an era of proliferating services.

An application to the ABA for prior approval of a temporary breach preceded the ABA decision which usually remains confidential until the transaction has occurred. An agreement between the ABA and Prime has allowed this information to be made public.

Permission to be in temporary breach does not imply ABA endorsement of one potential bidder over another in this situation. Clearly, there are a number of possible outcomes. The ABA exemption to Prime is merely a flexible, administrative device allowed under the Act,' said ABA Chairman, Mr Brian Johns.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I refer to your article in *ABA Update* No. 7, entitled 'Children's Program Classification Procedures - A Year in Review'.

The article stresses the delays which occurred under the old system, involving the Children's Program Committee, and contrasts that with the new streamlined fast track procedures of the last 12 months. It even goes so far as to refer to the Skippy controversy as being about delays in classification. Our understanding of this matter was that it was a matter of standards, that certain episodes of Skippy were refused a C certificate by the CPC. It was these which Channel 9 put to air to prove a point.

Nowhere in the article is there any reference to the quality of the programs except in so far as the number of programs refused a C or P is mentioned. Surely the ABA should be concerned about the quality. Is it good, better or worse than under the previous system?

There is more to children's television than statistics.

Yours faithfully

Max Hall

**Chairman
Australian Children's Television
Action Committee**

Response

Yes, the ABA is concerned about the quality of children's television programs. Only those programs which meet the quality criteria set out in the Children's Television Standards are classified C or P.

There has been no change to the standards since programs were assessed by the Children's Program Committee, and the aim of the standards remains the same, 'that children should have access to a variety of quality television programs made specifically for them, including Australian drama and non-drama'.

But there have been significant changes in the means by which children's programs are assessed and classified under the standards.

The article in ABA Update No 7 focused on these changed means, together with a brief overview of the first 12 months under the new system, in order to provide some feedback to interested parties on the operation of that system.



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