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## THREE DAY AD BLACKOUT FOR THE HILLS BY-ELECTION

The ABA advised industry organisations and SBS of a blackout on election advertising before the by-election for the NSW state seat of The Hills on Saturday 28 August.

The blackout started at midnight on Wednesday 25 August and applied until close of polling. Broadcasters are not permitted to air political advertisements during the blackout period.

The ban does not prohibit news or current affairs coverage of the election, discussion of political issues on talk-back radio or interviews with candidates. The ban is a requirement of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*.

'The blackout continues a practice in place for many years. The former Broadcasting Act imposed similar restrictions on broadcasters,' said Ms Debra Richards, Director Programs.

Operators of new categories of services, such as open narrowcasters and subscription broadcasters, are also subject to the blackout provisions.



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## ABA FAX NUMBER

The ABA fax number listing in the 1993 Sydney phone book is wrong. The correct number is (02) 334 7799.

The phone number listing is correct: (02) 334 7700.



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## NARROWCAST RADIO SERVICES

Since the introduction of narrowcast services in October 1992, the ABA has received 893 applications for open narrowcast radio services. Of these, 280 have been licensed, 58 have been licensed for special events, 165 rejected and 390 are pending.



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## THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN THE MEDIA

**THE FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF A SPEECH DELIVERED IN JULY TO THE NATIONAL INDUSTRY FORUM ON THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN THE MEDIA, BY SENATOR ROSEMARY CROWLEY, MINISTER FOR FAMILY SERVICES, MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER FOR THE STATUS OF WOMEN.**

have been asked here today to launch the new research data produced by Media Insight for the National Working Party on the Portrayal of Women in the Media.

For more than a decade, research has found that the portrayal of women in the media and in advertising is grossly insufficient and inappropriate.

There is too little coverage of women. Too few women are seen on television. There are too few women in management and too few are involved in producing the news. Where women are portrayed they are too often shown as unintelligent, or sexy, or as housewives only responsible for housework. As one woman told Consumer Contact research in 1992 'you are either a bimbo or a drone - a sex object or a drudge'.

This new research by Media Insight analysed 5000 news items. Its findings confirmed what most women knew or suspected: that the portrayal of women is out of step with changes in our life styles and our economic circumstances.

But the package goes even further. It investigates the financial implications for the media, and its advertisers, of ignoring the views of women. To quote Jennifer Rowe, 'the media is not going to change because it is a good and worthy thing to do'. She points out that the media is driven by the ratings and if they can see that they are suffering they will change.

This research quantifies the value of gender balance in television and newspapers. Gender balanced programming takes into account the concern of the 51 per cent of the population, the women who according to the research by Mattingly and partners, control the vast bulk of household spending and saving.

This latest research, coming on top of ten years of research on women's portrayal in the media demands action by the media. Let me spell out the challenges as I see them. The challenge for the industry

is to break the mould. The challenge is drop dated images of women. The challenge is to present women as they really are. The challenge is to provide equal employment for women in all aspects of the media.

And there are rewards:- the reward for the media is that it makes good business sense.

That is improved ratings for television and wider circulation for newspapers. The reward for advertisers is increased audiences for their product. Of course there is a wider reward for us all in the extension of equity and fairness in our society a society which believes in equal opportunity for all in all areas - economically, socially, politically and culturally.

Although community attitudes are changing to reflect these equalities, it is true to say that these changes are not flowing evenly through the community. There is a need for us to reflect those changes which are occurring in the way we depict women.

Too often women are depicted as sex objects or victims of sensationalised and often violent sex crimes. Sexist stereotyping of women persists in journalism and advertising. According to the research findings of Southdown Press, a major publisher of women's magazines, 62 per cent of women did not believe that the media accurately reflected their lives.

Inaccurate, degrading and misleading images continue to be used. For example, recently a car manufacturer saw fit to use a pregnant woman's stomach to sell cars. No consideration was given to women's possible perception of the ad. Little wonder there was such a public outcry from women. And I would be surprised if this would encourage any women to buy this car. Any woman who has gone through childbirth would be unlikely to be assured of either arriving on time or in one piece.

Women are not yet equal and that lack of equality is highlighted by the media. The community agrees that men and women should have equal rights. The debate on that issue is over - it's behind us. However, the media has failed to represent that view.

The media has been too slow to reflect the immense changes in women's lives over the last two decades. And it fails to reflect the diversity of lifestyle and workforce experiences and the expertise and ambition of women of all ages and backgrounds. The media would be far more appealing to women consumers if it recognised and reflected the new realities of our lives.

There is major dissatisfaction among Australian women about the ways women are shown in advertisements. This was verified in a 1988 random telephone survey of 1002 women aged 18 years and over.

Sadly, as the research shows, the situation has not changed much in the last five years. Women still believe that advertising reinforces and in some cases actually promotes expectations that undervalue the position of women in society. As the Kit says, it is not a case of media images having to lead so that social change will follow. It is simply a case of depicting women as they are.

As the evidence presented today shows - women wish to see themselves portrayed, particularly in advertising, as intelligent, informed and competent. Women want their different roles as worker, wife, mother and daughter to be reflected by the way they are portrayed in the media. They want to see themselves in all their diversity: age, appearance, ethnic origin, education, in offices, factories, homes on the sports field, as serious, sad, thoughtful, funny or creative.

Women are the major purchasers of magazines and are consuming magazines at record rates. Conversely, according to the 1992 Morgan Readership Survey women are abandoning weekday newspapers at a higher rate than men. Why? Is it simply because women are invisible in newspapers? They nearly are! The fact is only 27 per cent of by-lines on the front pages of regional and metro dailies were women. The fact is only 14 per cent of all proper names mentioned in newspapers were women. And where

women were mentioned, 37 per cent were in human interest stories.

There is no better example of women's near invisibility than the sports pages of our newspapers and sports programs on television. Indeed women's participation in sport has been a continuing interest of mine during my political career since I convened the *Women's Sport and*



Senator Rosemary Crowley

*Media Report for Government* in 1984-85. I note that this research sees women attracting four per cent of sports coverage in print and television - that is about double my findings in 1984 that sports coverage took up only two per cent of column inches in sports pages. Nonetheless, it is by any criteria insufficient.

As the research says - women are the missing story from our newspapers, and newspapers appear to be paying a high price for ignoring 51 per cent of the population.

In the period 1986-1992 women's magazines showed the biggest gain in absolute share of the magazine market. *The Australian Investor's Newsletter* of March 1993 found that in 1992, 58.4 per cent of the gross annual magazine circulation was captured by women's general interest magazines. Considering the number and diversity of magazines on the market this is a significant proportion.

However, women are also the largest consumers of television. They watch more television than men. Women's program

preferences are not currently being satisfied. It is as if they were invisible. The research shows:

- 38 per cent of women reported a preference for drama programs but only 10 per cent of transmission time in peak viewing periods was devoted to drama on commercial channels in 1990.
- only 10 per cent of women expressed a preference for existing sports programs but 24 per cent of viewing time for the same period was devoted to existing sports. Women's sports such as netball, which is the largest participate sport in Australia and amongst the largest of men's and women's sports have enjoyed large audiences when shown on television. For example, the Australian and New Zealand test last year was dramatic, thrilling and a huge rating success for the ABC. Indeed, the ABC and Channel 7 in my own state of SA deserved congratulations for their netball coverage.

The large viewing audiences of such programs are confirmation that there are opportunities going to waste in the media.

There are significant economic consequences. Using a hypothetical case study, the insight research has suggested that the commercial benefits of gender balance in television programming are financially tangible. Based on this hypothetical study, gender balanced programming during peak viewing times could substantially increase the total audience. This would have the potential to yield 35 million dollars in additional revenue over a 12 month period - or approximately \$100 000 per viewing day.

Hypothetical projections for the current year indicate that

- \$1.86 billion dollars will be shared by the commercial networks and channels in advertising revenue.
- the peak evening sector will gain slightly over 55 per cent of this advertising expenditure

It therefore makes good economic sense to address the concerns of women in order to attract their interest. As I said before, there is a challenge in all this for the industry. And its reward is profit.

The facts from the research add up to a clear message: give the consumer what

she wants in programs and advertising. Because she decides how money is spent in the main. The reality is that women make up 42 per cent of employed persons and the number of women with their own small business is increasing at three times the rate of men.

Women are the primary financial decision makers in the household. The Mattingly report on Women and Banking found that women use their position as credit controllers to manage how the money is spent. They control the domestic purse. In fact, women play the decision making role or influence the decisions to make major purchases in the top six national advertising expenditure categories.

These categories are consumer durables (foodstuffs, clothing), motor vehicles and accessories, insurance/finance, banks, travel/tours/sports and recreation, and household equipment/appliances.

In other words ignoring women is bad for business. Ignoring women is a million dollar mistake. As with any market those suppliers who respond best to the needs of the customer will win. So will the advertisers. So will the viewers.

From this research a lot of ideas have been generated and issues presented. It is now time to get down to the important but difficult issue of where do we go from here? How do we change things? What steps do we take?

Effective education programs in media and communication courses in our tertiary institutions need to be developed to raise gender awareness in new recruits to the industry? The industry must be encouraged to self regulate. More women must be employed at all levels, including management and programming? There needs to be encouragement for non-sexist creativity in program making and advertising. These are questions I want the industry itself to answer.

There are some indications, however, that the media is listening to women and that changes are occurring. For example, we are often critical of the way the media treats the issue of violence against women. But in recent times the media appears to be tapping into a sense that the community has had enough.

The media is now demonstrating that they can play a fundamental and positive role in articulating community concerns.

*The Sydney Morning Herald* devoted an entire page to letters on the subject in May 1993. And *The Age* in Melbourne has run a series of excellent articles on violence against women.

On the issue of equal employment opportunities for women in the media, I note the two very important recent appointments of Carmel Travers to General Manager of Network News and Current Affairs for the Ten network and Valerie Hardy as Program Manager for the Ten network. And that the ABC, for example, has made significant advances in regard to work place equity for women. But there is still some way to go.

*The Sydney Morning Herald* recently reported that one third of 652 women in ABC radio around Australia surveyed, believe that there are barriers to their promotion to senior management.

- over 60 per cent believed the ABC should take action to dismantle the barriers and 62 per cent wished to undergo management training.
- only three women are currently employed as regional program managers.

I do not wish in any way to undervalue the great efforts which have been put in by the ABC in EEO - but I note the survey results to point out the effort is going to be ongoing and long term.

In other areas there is also some progress. In 1993

- women are commonly presenters and reporters in news and current affairs
- a greater variety of female characters appear in television drama

But the research shows it is not enough and it is time for the industry itself to take hold of the issues and to make the changes.

There are four key areas:

1. to develop effective education programs;
2. to address the regulatory framework to ensure gender balance throughout the industry. I have recently had a letter from the Federation of Australian Radio Broadcasters advising me of their new set of guidelines on the portrayal of women on commercial radio. I welcome this as a very positive step. These guidelines were developed in consultation with women's groups and encourage broadcasters to avoid promoting or endors-

- ing inaccurate, demeaning or discriminatory descriptions of women;
3. to ensure the employment of more women at all levels;
4. to encourage non-sexist creativity in program making and advertising.

These will be the areas which I will be encouraging the industry to address. And it is in everybody's best interest that these issues are addressed by the industry itself. I have made arrangements with chief executives of the television media and plan to meet within a month. These meetings will be to discuss the creation of industry working groups to address the issues raised today. Initially I am asking the television industry to address these issues. It is my hope that within six months we will be able to ask the radio and print media industries to also address these issues within their own areas.

The information kit and the research material released today by the National Working Party is, I believe, a good starting point. I would be happy to work with you in your endeavours to eliminate gender imbalance within the media. As I said earlier in my speech this research shows that women's complaints are real and justified. It is up to you in the industry to address these concerns.

The Government is committed to this issue and to continuing its role in the debate. But it is time for the industry to take responsibility for itself

As I have said before, improving the gender balance in advertising, programming and management is good business. It is an opportunity to improve ratings, to improve profits and to give us all a fair go.

Women and the Media is in fact the third most important item listed in the New National Agenda for Women. It points to the gains already achieved and makes this a priority area for change in the future.

I would like to thank the members of the National Working Party on the Media for the hard work and determined effort they have put in over the last four years. I would particularly like to thank their Chairperson, Anne Deveson for all her hard work and for providing this opportunity for discussion on this important issue.

