

The global changes I have outlined are underway. We can join them or stand to one side. If we are to be joiners we have to adjust our thinking. It is not right - in principle or pragmatically - to settle for a self-contained element when we have the skills to achieve more.

Obviously the export of programs and expertise is central to sustaining Australian production in the future. I believe we have to have a structured approach to export.

I have said before that neither the domination by Hollywood nor by British publishing would have been possible without a structured approach to distribution and ownership.

I read with interest the Screen Production Association of Australia's (SPAA) special report on export published in the August issue of its journal, *Above The Line*. The report found that while there is informal co-operation between agencies there is an issue of co-ordination to be addressed.

SPAA's investigation stated that across the relevant government agencies surveyed there is, 'the general opinion that a national, industry-wide strategy should underpin our film and television export industry and that we will be looking at problems in the long term if we continue on without one.'

As I have said, the creative tensions of participation in the world audio visual arena are not ones encountered by Australia alone.

One of the things behind the issue of the CER and Australian content is concern about co-productions. Co-production can be a mechanistic stab at mixing stars from different countries to produce a creative botch simultaneously in several languages. Or it can be a device

to simply secure cheaper off-shore facilities.

Its interesting to look at where things have worked better. For example, more successful have been magazine co-productions where each partner has creative control over an individual program.

The Asian Broadcasting Union has been the co-ordinating body for a number of years for a wide-ranging series of the magazine type. Earlier this month at the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union's production conference in Kuala

What we are
all trying to do
is influence
programming to
reflect our
different cultural
values

Lumpur Dina Browne, the director of children's programming for the Seven Network, proposed just such a program initiative.

Her proposal for a children's magazine program to which television stations in the south east Asia-Pacific region will contribute five minute segments has the potential to become a major on-going series. It is an initiative to be applauded.

'Derrick' and 'Navarro', both seen

here on SBS, are among the few programs that travel all of Europe. That's how hard it is. Like 'Neighbours', 'Derrick' is a program that is both culturally authentic and speaks to a universal audience.

At the end of the day the challenge is to safeguard creativity without being overly defensive. There needs to be a leap in our thinking. We need to leave the standard in place but do more in addition. And it is this: we must recognise that Australia is confronted with a massive balance of payment problem - a forbidding creative and cultural trade deficit.

That reality has to be confronted: at the network level; at the industry level; within the bureaucracy; and at all levels of government, including, as I have said within regional arrangements like APEC.

Simply, we have to recognise that in buying we should also be selling. As I said earlier, there is no single solution to the complex problems we face. We, and I mean all of us, are inclined when it suits us to discuss Australian television content standards in isolation.

And while this attests to the major achievement of the Australian content standard since the 1960s, it is foolish to believe one vehicle can carry the whole load.

While we must not lose sight of all of the Commonwealth and State agencies and other forces working to support Australian programming, we must recognise the need to broaden the structural framework.

We should not lack confidence. If we can identify the challenges, we will find the means. We have now decades of experience to inspire us.



ABA TRENDS & ISSUES PAPERS ON AUSTRALIAN TV PROGRAMMING

The ABA has published two Trends & Issues papers on Australian television programming. The first, *Australian Content on Television 1990-92*, contains figures on the performance of commercial stations against the ABA's Australian content and children's television standards.

The second, *Viewing Australia*, presents ABA research findings in

audience attitudes to Australian television programs and films in 1992.

MAIN POINTS

- All stations met the minimum Australian transmission quota in each of the three years and met the minimum drama/diversity score.
- All stations met the C drama mini-

score for the three year period.

- Serials and soaps were the most liked types of Australian programs, but there was little demand for more.
- Clear demand exists for more Australian mini-series.

Australian Content on Television 1990-1992 and *Viewing Australia* are available from the ABA, price \$5 each.

