

PROGRAMS CLASSIFIED C AND P

The following table contains details of programs granted C and P classification by the ABA between 16 March and 12 April 1993. Producers interested in submitting programs for classification should contact Nigel Ryan on (02) 959 7930.

PROGRAM TITLE	ORIGIN	CLASSIFICATION	NEW/RENEWAL	DECISION DATE	APPLICANT
BOBBY'S WORLD (Series 3)	USA	C	new	17.3.1993	Television and Telecasters Limited (Network Ten Australia)
DOOPA KNOWS	Australia	C	new	30.3.1993	Golden West Network - Telepro
HATING ALISON ASHLEY	Australia	PRC	new	30.3.1993	Crawford Productions Pty Ltd

Legend: CAD = C Australian Drama PRC = Provisional c

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM CLASSIFICATION PROCEDURES - A YEAR IN REVIEW

The current Children's Television Standards (CTS) came into effect on 1 January 1990. They oblige commercial television licensees to broadcast minimum annual quotas (equivalent to approximately one hour per day) of specially classified children's programs. These programs must be classified by the ABA before they are put to air. The objective of the standards is that, 'Children should have access to a variety of quality television programs made specifically for them, including Australian drama and non-drama programs.'

In March 1992, the former Australian Broadcasting Tribunal (ABT) changed the way it assessed and classified these children's programs. Previously, it had used an advisory committee - the Children's Program Committee (CPC). However, the ABT had been concerned for some time about the administrative efficiency of its committee system and had placed it under review in June the previous year. When public controversy arose around delays in the classification of some new Skippy episodes early in 1992, the ABT decided to finalise its review of the committee's operation. As a result, the ABT disbanded the CPC and adopted 'fast track' internal assessment procedures based on staff assessment and the use of specialist consultants.

In October 1992, the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* was enacted and the ABA was created, superseding the ABT. The

attendant *Broadcasting Services (Transitional Provisions and Consequential Amendments) Act 1992* carried over the existing Children's Television Standards. The ABA continued the fast track assessment and classification procedures then in place when it took over from the ABT.

The procedures have now been in operation for a full year. They have proven to be a success in terms of improved client service, much reduced material requirements for applications, reduced processing time and the provision to applicants of more timely and comprehensive reports of the reasons for decisions to refuse applications. The quality of advice from consultants has been more than satisfactory and at a lower overall cost than the previous committee system.

A key objective of the new assessment procedures is to separate the majority of programs which can be classified more readily and speedily from the more complex and time consuming applications. This had previously been quite difficult under the committee-based monthly meeting and program assessment cycle which treated applications in batches.

In the 12 month period 20 March 1992 to 20 March 1993, 89 programs were submitted seeking C, C Australian drama, provisional C or P classification. Sixty-eight programs (76%) were granted classification while 21 (24%) were refused. All but one were programs seeking clas-

sification for the first time. This contrasts markedly with the first year of operation of the current children's standards in which 31% of the 209 applications were seeking renewal of classifications granted under the previous children's standards. In the first two years of operation, 22% of applications were for renewal of classifications.

In the past 12 months the average time to process applications was 26 days. The average time to process programs granted classification was just under 16 days while the average processing time for refused applications was 38 days. The longer time to process programs refused classification reflects the greater complexity of these assessments and the greater investment of time needed to manage the use of external consultants for specialist advice.

While an average of 38 days for programs refused classification is not ideal, the system has proven very successful in clearing the way for programs to be individually assessed on a 'first come first served' basis. The new system avoids the systemic delays previously attached to processing applications in batches on a monthly basis and allows the bulk of applications to be assessed and decided promptly. The ABA continues to work toward reducing the processing time for all applications for children's programs.

