

AUSTRALIAN CONTENT ON TELEVISION

In an address to the Screen Production Association of Australia Annual Conference at the end of November last year, ABA Chairman, Brian Johns, stated his firm belief that the informal and relaxed exchanges of ideas and views on Australian content are an important part of the ABA's consultative process.

Mr Johns told members of SPAA that he wanted to talk, to listen and to be open to what they have to say about how the ABA and industry collectively could work towards strengthening the Australian presence on television.

While he made it clear that the ABA was not commencing a formal review of the Australian content standards, Mr Johns expressed the view that the fact the standards exist gives the ABA an opportunity to undertake informal

discussions 'without the pressure cooker environment of a formal review'.

Since then, in a series of bilateral meetings, many members of the film and television production industry have taken up the Chairman's invitation to engage in informal discussions on the issue of Australian content.

Mr Johns has had discussions with representatives from production industry unions: Michael Gordon-Smith of the Screen Production Association of Aus-

tralia (SPAA), Anne Britton of the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) and the National Council of the Australian Writers Guild (AWG). He has met

In three separate meetings, a number of producers have taken the opportunity to discuss their views with Mr Johns. In February he met with John Brown (The Tourism Task Force), Terry Ohlsson (then with Crawfords Australia) and Nick McMahon (Village Roadshow Pictures Australia). In March Mr Johns met with Errol Sullivan, Sandra Levy, John Edwards and Hal McElroy (Southern Star Entertainment).

Most recent discussions have included independent documentary producers David Flatman (David Flatman Productions), John Mabey (Sorena), Dick Dennison (Orana Films) and Will Davies (Look Film Productions). At the end of January the Chairman, Tim O'Keefe (ABA Member) and staff of the ABA participated in a round table discussion organised by the Communications Law Centre (CLC). Also represented at this multilat-

eral meeting were the MEAA, AWG, SPAA, the Australian Film Commission and the Australian Screen Directors Association.

Mr Johns has been encouraged by the enthusiasm with which his invitation to discuss this complex issue has been accepted and with the openness of the discussions to date.

The invitation is still open and should you wish to arrange a meeting, please contact Deborah Sims on (02) 959 7923.



with the Board of the Australian Film Finance Corporation and with Jan Zwar from the Department of Industry and Technology. Dr Patricia Edgar (Australian Children's Television Foundation) also met with the Chairman to discuss Australian children's programs. During his visit to Australia in December, Bob Linnell from the London office of Telefilm Canada met with Mr Johns to discuss Canada's approach to local content issues.

