

COMPLAINTS IN 1992-93

In the ABA's recently released 1993-94 Annual Report information on complaints made direct to the ABA about programs on commercial television and radio, community radio and on the ABC and SBS television and radio were presented:

- The ABA received 2348 complaints for all broadcasting sectors, including for the first time, a full year of complaints about ABC and SBS services. In the previous year 2606 complaints were received.

- Of the 2348 complaints received by the ABA, a total of 1542 complaints related to commercial television, compared with 2283 complaints for the previous year, a drop of one third. For the same period, 277 complaints were received for commercial radio, a slight increase compared with 258 received in 1992-93.

- A total number of 270 complaints was recorded by the ABA about ABC television. Seventy-nine (79) of these were about the coverage of the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, mostly received prior to the broadcast. The ABA received 15 complaints about the ABC television program 'Sex, Guys and Videotape'.

- A comedysketch on 'Hey Hey It's Saturday', involving nude male balloon dancers, was the most complained about single program issue on commercial television with 24 complaints. An equal number of people protested to the ABA about the possible broadcast of the US cartoon series, 'Beavis and Butthead'. Nudity in the Nivea Cream advertisement attracted 18 complaints. News and current affairs programs and advertising were also the subject of regular complaint.

- The ABA received 22 complaints about the Stan Zemanek radio program on a commercial radio station.

The ABA categorises the direct complaints it receives by either subject matter or code provision. General taste and decency on television, with 416 complaints, generated the most complaints in 1993-94. This was followed by program scheduling arrangements with 206. Programs which were considered unsuitable for children followed with 120 complaints. Also of concern was violence on television with 67 complaints, followed by concerns about inappropriate material broadcast during G-classified programs with 50 complaints. □

MINISTER SNAFFLES 'OUR DEB'



The ABA is reeling at the loss of one of its most treasured staffers, Deb Richards, who has headed south down the Hume Highway to take up a position as broadcasting advisor to the Honourable Michael Lee, Minister for Communications and the Arts.

Debra joined the ABA's predecessor, the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, in 1985 and was a key figure in the ABT's wide-reaching public inquiries which resulted in the overhaul of the Australian content and children's television program standards in the late 1980s. Deb was also well known for her contribution to children's television.

When the ABA replaced the ABT, Debra took up the challenge of heading the Program Services Branch which over the past two years has, among other things, helped the commercial television and radio industries implement their codes

of practice, allocated the two satellite pay TV licences—as well as a swag of cable licences—and produced some ground-breaking research about children and television.

At a special farewell lunch, ABA Chairman Mr Brian Johns paid tribute to Debra as a person of quality and said that as well as her public and professional qualities, there is a lot of fun about Debra that would be sorely missed at the ABA.

In a valedictory poem—a literary form which Debra instilled at the ABT and at which she excelled—Nick Herd, Standards Manager, hit the nail on the head when he said: 'Not only is she able to help the boss\It's her colleagues and her staff who will really feel the loss'.

Ms Lesley Osborne, Codes and Conditions, will head the Program Services Branch until further notice. □