

New associate member

Mr John Dickie has been appointed as a part-time associate member of the ABA by Mr Michael Lee, Minister for Communications and the Arts. Mr Dickie has been appointed under section 156(1)(a) of the *Broadcasting Service Act 1992* for the purposes of the investigation into the regulation of on-line information and entertainment services.

Mr Dickie is Chief Censor at the Office of Film and Literature Classification. His appointment relates to the Minister for Communications and the Arts' request that the ABA's investigation consider issues relating to the nature of the relationship between the nature of the material available and community standards and the protection of children. His expertise will also assist the ABA when considering issues relating to the measures to encourage or require community needs to be met.

As part of its investigation, the ABA will take account of the reports of the Broadband Services Expert Group, the Computer Bulletin Board Services Task Force, the Communications Futures Project and the Senate Select Committee on Community Standards.

For further discussion about the ABA's on-line services investigation, see Q&A, pp.10, 11.

Broadbanders should take action

SYDNEY: Telecommunications, broadcasting and computing industry groups involved in developing on-line services should take action now on community and government concerns, according to Mr Peter Webb, ABA Chairman. Speaking at the Cable TV and Interactive Services Conference in Sydney, Mr Webb said,

'If industry takes an active role in resolving some of the possible problems raised by the content of on-line services, Government policy need not be interventionist. This result will probably have to be earned, rather than conferred.'

He said neither government nor the community would be likely to accept an on-line

industry which took no responsibility for content, especially problematic material which raises social and ethical questions.

Mr Webb said both the Commonwealth and State governments have made it clear they might introduce legislation designed to curb behaviour which constituted a criminal offence.

'On the other hand, the business community and individuals who value their right to freedom of expression will not accept controls that infringe on commerce or stifle individual creativity and self-expression,' Mr Webb said.

'A middle ground must be found in policy terms, and industry should do its part with government and the community to find it for Australia.'

He said the on-line industry needs to clearly define its many sectors, form industry associations to represent these participants and articulate a responsible industry attitude to the community.

'Competitors in the on-line service industries will have to find neutral ground upon which to meet and agree on policy questions,' he said.

Mr Webb said government will expect on-line service industries to do what industries like the commercial television and radio sectors have achieved.

'These sectors have worked together to define a competitive framework which respects community needs and concerns,' he said.

Pay TV drama guidelines

SYDNEY: The ABA has released its latest draft guidelines for new Australian drama on pay TV.

Each pay TV broadcasting licensee which provides a service predominantly devoted to drama programs, must ensure at least 10 per cent of annual program expenditure in relation to that service is spent on new Australian drama programs.

The ABA has defined a pay TV drama service as one which shows more than 50 per cent of drama programming annually. This includes services which show live action and animation techniques (like cartoons) for more than 50 per cent of their programming. Animation has always been recognised as drama by free-to-air television regulations.

'Parliament's aim when drafting the licence condition was to create new opportunities for the Australian drama production industry by providing jobs and developing creative Australian product for these new services,' said ABA Chairman, Mr Peter Webb.

The ABA will hold further discussions with



John Dickie

