



the 1542 complaints received by the ABA during 1993-94 in relation to commercial television, four per cent related to violence. She further stated that the ABA's complaints data did not indicate that the level of complaint about commercial television was increasing, nor was the level of complaint about violence.

In addressing the Committee's questions about the effects of violence, Ms Osborne said the ABA had a charter to conduct research into community attitudes on programming issues. Whilst the ABA was informed about the evidence on the effects of media violence, it was an area better left for comment by academics and psychologists who use research methodologies appropriate for causal studies.

Ms Marin in her evidence explained that the results of research undertaken by the ABA are referred to the industry so that it is aware of community standards when administering the code. Concern about the depiction of particularly violent or distressing incidents on television is reflected in the research and in the ABA's complaints data, she said.

In response to the Committee's questions as to how the ABA handles complaints and how it publicises the process, Ms Marin explained that members of the public who contact the ABA have their complaint recorded and the formal complaints procedure explained to them. She explained that the FACTS code contained provisions requiring the publicising of the

code and that FACTS reported quarterly to the ABA on complaints received. The code requires FACTS to publish an annual report of complaints which is made available to the public.

Ms Marin informed the Committee that the ABA would shortly be publishing a comprehensive review of complaints received

TV reception distorted by natural phenomena

The summer problem of distorted television pictures has returned to Australia, judging by about 20 recent complaints to the ABA.

Typical interference examples are a picture superimposed on another and horizontal bars appearing on the screen (a 'venetian blind' effect). Interference can last a few minutes or for hours.

The sporadic interference is caused by two natural phenomena and should lessen from March onwards.

One phenomenon is a seasonal change in the troposphere surrounding the earth which can cause VHF and UHF television signals to be reflected back to earth. Normally these signals pass through the tropospheric layers so reflection is not an issue.

Coastal television reception is most likely to be affected. High pressure weather systems and still conditions enhance the interference. Most complaints have been received from NSW coastal areas.

The other cause of interference results when the ionosphere, about 120 km above the earth, is denser than usual. This can cause television signals, particularly in the low VHF channels, to bounce back to earth between 1000 and 2000 km from where they originated.

Channels 0, 1 and 2 are very susceptible to interference resulting from this occurrence.

Siphoning - information gathering and monitoring

On 22 December 1994, the Minister for Communications and the Arts directed the ABA to monitor the offering and acquisition of rights to broadcast events contained in his 'anti-siphoning' notice. The Minister also asked the ABA to monitor the extent to which those events were broadcast and to monitor any other events he might consider specifying in the notice. The ABA is to report to the Minister at six monthly intervals or on such occasions the ABA considers appropriate. ☐

