

The ACMA hosts inaugural Children's Television Classification Forum

Members of the Australian children's television industry gathered at L'Aqua Restaurant in Sydney on 22 June for the inaugural Children's Television Classification Forum, hosted by the ACMA.

Moderated by former Australian Broadcasting Authority Member, Michael Gordon-Smith, the forum attracted 70 participants who represented a cross-section of the industry, including program makers, broadcast licensees, child development consultants and members of industry organisations. A number of ACMA staff were also in attendance, including Olya Booyar, General Manager of the Content, Consumer and Citizen Division, who opened the forum.

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The idea of an ACMA-hosted forum to discuss matters relating to children's television in Australia arose from the 2007–2009 review of the Children's Television Standards, which recommended regular meetings with industry to discuss the interpretation of classification criteria and the potential for changes to the classification process.

The initiative was warmly received by industry, which indicated a strong preference for similar events to be held on a yearly basis. The ACMA is currently considering all comments and recommendations made by participants

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range of topics, including the meaning of child-specific programming, the particular needs of an Australian child audience and the approach for determining the entertainment value of a program. The prospect of alternative classification models was also floated, but the ACMA's ongoing role in the classification process received strong support.

and will take these into account in any alteration to the classification process and in the planning of future events. ☎



Forum moderator Michael Gordon-Smith speaking to participants at the event.



Cherrie Bottger from Network Ten with Richard Fraser from the ACMA.



From left to right: Joseph Crichton from the ACMA, Paul Barron from ScreenWest/Great Western Entertainment and Jonathan M. Shiff from Jonathan M. Shiff Productions.

What are C and P classifications?

The ACMA is required to develop standards for children's programming. The Children's Television Standards 2009 (CTS) aim to ensure that children have access to a variety of quality television programs made specifically for them, including Australian drama and non-drama programs, and to provide for the protection of children from the possible harmful effects of television.

Under the CTS, the ACMA pre-classifies children's programs on commercial free-to-air television, granting C classification to programs made for 5 to 13-year-olds and P classification to programs made for preschoolers. In order to receive a C or P classification, programs must meet the following criteria.

A children's program is a program which:

- > is made specifically for children or groups of children
- > is entertaining
- > is well produced using sufficient resources to ensure a high standard of script, cast, direction, editing, shooting, sound and other production elements
- > enhances a child's understanding and experience
- > is appropriate for Australian children.

Commercial free-to-air licensees must broadcast at least 260 hours of C material and 130 hours of P material each year. These programs may be broadcast from 7.00 am to 8.30 am and 4.00 pm to 8.30 pm on weekdays and between 7.00 am and 8.30 pm on weekends and public holidays.