



## A 'Good News' Page

# Well Done, FARB!

Amongst the less enlightened attitudes of some of their colleagues from other sections of the media, the response of Federation of Australian Radio Broadcasters (FARB) - the body which represents commercial radio - to the portrayal of indigenous Australians and their concerns shines like a beacon.

FARB has developed and circulated to its members a detailed set of guidelines for such portrayal. The impetus for FARB's initiative came from the lead-up to the Media and Indigenous Australians conference, and the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The process of developing the guidelines involved consultation between FARB, NIMAA, ATSIC and DOTAC. FARB's guidelines are drawn from DOTAC draft guidelines endorsed by the Brisbane conference, and were adapted for radio.

The guidelines are accompanied by excellent explanatory notes, which among other things include a list of NIMAA representatives to contact for advice on appropriate spokespeople; some recommended educational reading on the issue of portraying indigenous Australians; and a useful glossary of preferred and unacceptable terminology. In the latter category are such pejoratives as *abo*, *half/quarter caste*, *full blood*, *lubra* and *native*.

The guidelines point out that NIMAA regards talk-back radio as 'providing an almost irresistible opportunity for the expression of views and attitudes of hostility towards Aboriginal people, especially when such views are also shared by a host, or allowed to be broadcast unchallenged by a host'.

This message also came strongly out in the recent research studies by OMA and the ABA. It is to be hoped

# Positive Approach Gets Results

**The ABC's top-rating program *The Investigators* provides an example of positive action to redress the balance towards people of non-English speaking background.**

Although NESB consumers have similar problems to those of other consumers, inquiries by OMA showed that hardly any complaints from them had featured on the program. This was possibly as a result of lack of knowledge of their consumer rights, as well as language barriers, and there was also a lack of awareness on the part of ABC producers.

A consultant researcher was engaged, with OMA's assistance, with a brief to approach ethnic communities, act as a contact point, and create networks for NESB consumer access to the program, while at the same time raising awareness of the communities' concerns within *The Investigators* unit.

The ABC regarded the nine months pilot as such a success that it subsequently employed the researcher permanently with the same area of responsibility.

This was one of the success stories related at the OMA round table conference by Minister Nick Bolkus - though he suggested it was regrettable that the ABC had to be 'led by the nose...to do something which should have been obvious'.

OMA is also operating a trainee scheme enabling people from NESB to get experience as writers, producers and journalists. The scheme is now in its third and final year, and the intake of the first two years is now part of the industry - not, Bolkus said, because of so-called 'social engineering', but because they are as competent and professional as their Anglo counterparts. □

that stations which employ some of the worst offenders - Sydney's Alan Jones, John Laws and Ron Casey, for example - will bring the guidelines to their attention. No doubt the advent of this material has already caused heartburn at some country stations.

The guidelines expand on FARB's existing code barring material which incites hatred, ridicules or vilifies people on racial (and other) grounds. Unlike the codes, they are not enforceable, but are intended to help members understand the code. They include the following:

- Avoidance of prejudicial or belittling references to a person because they are Aboriginals or Torres Strait Islanders (and 'it is not up to a

broadcaster to question a person's claims of aboriginality').

- Respect for the protocols of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- A balanced approach to covering their problems which does not emphasise the negative to the exclusion of positive developments.
- Allowing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to reply.

A spokesman for FARB said the response to the guidelines from members had been good, and that FARB had almost finished developing a set of similar guidelines for the portrayal of women. □