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programs. Unlike commercial television, the ABC is not in the business of attempting to maximise its audience at all times. There is programming provided by the ABC - special interest rather than 'marginal' programming - which attracts committed audiences of a kind which would no doubt be prepared to pay substantially for more of the same on specialist pay TV services. There are some clues here for how the ABC might frame a more effective submission next time.

The TPC conceded that ABC research indicates that 'viewers consider the ABC's services to be of a high quality', but added that there was no indication of their willingness to pay for that quality.

On the question of stimulating production, the TPC concluded that on current evidence, any gains in this area would be outweighed by costs in terms of anti-competitive effects and consumer detriment.

On the issue of increased employment, the TPC concluded that the claimed benefit was 'essentially private in nature, with the benefits accruing directly to licensee C and its employees'. In its view, this private benefit did not flow on to the public.

The Commission was dismissive of the ABC's claim that its involvement in pay TV would protect the public interest in these new services. 'Its role in pay TV is considered to be that of a service provider, not a regulator or representative of the public interest', it said.

The Commission reiterated the Government's intention that the ABC should participate in pay TV in a commercial manner, and said that its national broadcasting function should be confined to its free-to-air operations. Significantly, the TPC concluded that 'it is not the role of licensee C...to generate revenues and profits for the ABC to perform its national broadcasting functions'. □

New Direction for Boyer Lectures

Late last year the ABC announced that this year's Boyer lecturer would be commercial media entrepreneur Kerry Stokes, who will give his 'vision for the future of Australian communications'.

The lecture series, begun in 1961 as a tribute to the distinguished ABC chairman Sir Richard Boyer, is 'the ABC's most prestigious spoken word series' involving 'a person of unqualified eminence in any field of Australian endeavour' (Clement Semmler, *The ABC - Aunt Sally and Sacred Cow*, 1981, p.46).

The list of past Boyer lecturers is a dazzling line-up of distinguished Australians like historian Manning Clark, economist Tom Fitzgerald, writer Shirley Hazzard, medical scientist Sir Gustav Nossal, and Aboriginal academic Eric Willmot. The lectures are a showcase for leading Australian thinkers, one of the few opportunities the media offer for Australians to exercise their minds and ponder weighty questions. While the topics may vary widely, and there may be more than one lecturer in a series, the lecturers have usually presented intellectually challenging ideas and original insights. Last year, in an innovative move to mark the Year of Indigenous People, the lectures were given by a number of indigenous Australians from different spheres of activity.

The choice of media proprietor Kerry Stokes seems a radical departure from previous selection criteria. ABC chair Mark Armstrong said that he had been 'a thoughtful and courageous leader in the communications revolution and an advocate and supporter of Australian culture' (the latter no doubt a reference to Mr Stokes's seat on the board of several performing and visual arts organisations).

Perth-based Mr Stokes, who early in his career was a TV technician, has a controlling interest in a WA regional station, 6FMS and owns The Canberra

Times as well as The Chronicle, a weekly. He first came to national notice in 1987 when he was awarded the third Perth commercial TV licence by a division of the ABT, which by a strange twist of fate included Mark Armstrong in an earlier incarnation.

Mr Stokes is the attractive face of commercial media ownership. His performance during the Perth inquiry so impressed the Tribunal that it subsequently invited him to put the commercial perspective on the issue of how Australian the media could or should be at a 1987 conference, where he made a light and chatty rather than visionary contribution.

Mr Stokes said at the time of the announcement of his Boyer lectureship that this was the first time the lectures had been presented by 'someone from commerce, someone who can represent economic as well as academic interests'.

'The areas I hope to address', he said, 'will include technology, the social impact of the various choices that will be available, the desirability of these choices and the cultural effect on the Australian idiom'. □

