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realistically achieved by each of the three networks' and in the case of Nine, represents an increase of 12 hours on the level of first release Australian drama achieved in 1993. The ABA postulates that an hour-based quota could encourage the production of the most hours for the least possible expenditure if the hour level is set too high or there are not enough 'offsets' (= trade-offs).

The second option is to maintain the current drama quota but simplify the points system. The ABA acknowledges that the fact that the current system does not require a set number of hours is an advantage since it allows a range of values on program formats and flexibility to determine a mixture of formats.

The trade-off in this area would be the removal of the 'Australian factor' test and its replacement by reliance on 10BA certification OR a 'one-step creative elements test' as a means of deter-

mining whether the program is Australian.

A program's score would be based on its format factor (the same as the current quality factors - in ascending order, series/serials produced at the rate of one hour or more a week, series/serials produced at the rate of one hour or less a week, and miniseries/cinema films/telemovies).

The ABA rejects any approach based on program costs, saying that it does not believe that making program licence fees more subject to direct regulation is desirable. This will not please SPAA, which strongly supported a cost factor in assessing quality. The ABA comments that none of the submissions it received fully developed a licence fee factor approach. 'The ABA is reluctant to become involved in determining a fair price for Australian drama programs', it concludes.

Both of the above models involve another major trade-off: increasing the first release drama time band to a twelve hour period between midday

and midnight. Theoretically, this would allow networks to dust off ancient drama pilots, unscreened episodes of failed series, or bad rejects from the AFI Award screenings, and put them to air in graveyard timeslots while at the same time gaining quota points.

Where to From Here?

The ABA is not cooling its heels over the holiday period while people ponder the implications of these proposals. On the contrary, it is seeking written comments on the proposals by 6 January, with the expectation that a final draft of the revised standard will be released before the end of January. In the meantime, there will be discussions with producers, broadcasters and other interested parties. □

Cultural Policy: Hot Topic

With cultural policy well and truly established on the Federal Government agenda, Griffith University in Queensland has grasped the opportunity to mount a major international conference on the subject next year.

As the organisers point out, cultural policy issues 'now dominate debate about communications and information technologies, cultural industries and cultural development, heritage management, tourism and urban planning'.

They are calling for papers (by 31 January) on a wide range of associated topics, including communications and new technologies, culture and government.

Titled *Cultural Policy: the State of the Art*, the conference will be held in Brisbane between 28 May-3 June. The organising committee for the conference comprises Tony Bennett, Sandra Buckley, Jennifer Craik and Colin Mercer.

Contact point is: The Administrative Officer, Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Griffith University Qld 4111, phone (07) 875 5511 fax (07) 875 7772.

Meanwhile, the Department of Communications and the Arts has produced the conference papers from its recent cultural talkfest *Creating Culture - the new growth industries* (August 11-12). The papers are accompanied by a video (what, no CD-ROM?) of the conference highlights, including vox pops from delegates, a dinner speech by Leo Schofield, and speech extracts and memorable quotes from every speaker.

This production is a snip at \$24.95. The conference papers cost the same (or free to those who attended). Purchase at Government bookshops, or by calling 008 020 049/faxing (06) 295 4888 with credit card details, or from AGPS Mail Order GPO Box 84 Canberra 2601. □

Setting Standards

'Raising the Standard', a Consumers Telecommunications Network (CTN) seminar (2 December) on the 'rather arcane' topic of user and consumer participation in telecommunications standards setting was surprisingly well attended, CTN Co-ordinator Trish Benson told CU after the event.

About 60 people from the industry and residential consumers attended. Representatives from AUSTEL, ATUG and information networks were among the speakers at the seminar, which considered the recommendations of a CTN report earlier this year on the subject of consumer participation in this area.

Benson said the day generated considerable enthusiasm for setting up an informal forum to provide input to the standards setting process, through the AFCO representative on technical standards committees for instance. Anyone interested in further information should contact Trish Benson on (02) 318 2026, fax (02) 318 2031, TTY (02) 318 2967. □