



Oz content hot potato dropped

The hottest potato of the ABA's draft Australian content standard - allowing the networks to count ABC and SBS produced drama and kids' drama towards their Australian content quotas - has been unceremoniously dropped.

A statement released by the ABA on 8 August headed off a torrent of criticism of the plan spearheaded by the Screen Producers' Association of Australia (SPAA), the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA), the Australian Film Finance Corporation, the Australian Film Commission, the Australian Writers' Guild and the Australian Screen Directors' Association.

In the statement, ABA chairman Peter Webb said it had become clear that those opposed to the ABC/SBS issue 'are very fearful of its capacity to dilute the drama quota, while those supporting it feel it will be of limited benefit.'

According to Kylie Burke, a research officer for SPAA, had the ABC/SBS proposal gone ahead, the equivalent of a commercial network's annual quota of Australian drama would have been cut out of the industry.

'This would have savaged the industry,' she said.

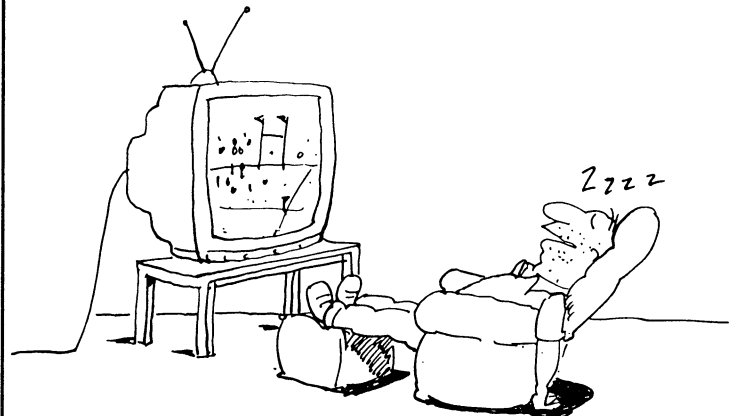
In a joint letter to the ABA, all the organisations representing Australian writers, actors, and screen producers warned that the proposal posed an unprecedented threat to the level and quality of Australian drama.

'The ABA's decision to treat ABC, SBS and pay TV repeats as quota eligible is at odds with the Government's unequivocal commitment as outlined in Creative Nation to promote an Australian presence in this influential broadcasting medium,' the letter stated.

The organisations were quick to point out that the ABA's own recently released report on the finances of the commercial TV industry showed a \$343 million profit for the last financial year while the commercials' spending on Australian programs appeared to be dropping - (1993-94 figures showed a drop of more than 9 per cent).

Other changes to the draft standard include:

- dropping the inclusion of sketch comedies from the definition of an Australian drama program;
- allowing feature films to be shown on free-to-air TV and earn first run points even if they have been previously shown on pay TV;
- changing the times at which children's programming finishes in the mornings and starts in the afternoons to allow for school starting and finishing times in different states. □



An Australian, content.

Review of phone monitoring systems

The NSW Privacy Committee has commenced a review of its Guidelines on Telephone Usage Monitoring Systems (TUMS) and Telephone Information Systems (TIMS).

The Guidelines, which were originally published in 1980, were last reviewed in 1983. Subsequent improvements in the capabilities and affordability of TUMS/TIMS have resulted in the increasing use of these systems throughout the public and private sectors, and therefore in the number of individuals affected by them.

The Committee is interested in systems that produce traffic data about communications passing over a private telecommunications network. The information that these systems may record about individual calls include the number of the phone in the network through which the call was made or received, the called or calling number from outside the network and the date, time and duration of the call. The Committee is also interested in examining the privacy implications of voice monitoring and recording systems, which are not currently dealt with in the Guidelines, in the course of this review.

The current Guidelines focus primarily on protecting the privacy of network users whose calls are subject to TUMS/TIMS but also on individuals outside such networks who are called from or call into those networks. The Guidelines address the appropriate uses of TUMS/TIMS and limitations on the collection of traffic data. They also deal with the use of TUMS/TIMS for surveillance of employees and the need to consult with and inform employees when installing TUMS/TIMS on a workplace telecommunications network.

The Committee will be consulting with key stakeholders, and would welcome submissions from any organisation or individual with an interest in this review. A copy of the Guidelines and further information about the review can be obtained by contacting Ms Shanthy Herd at the NSW Privacy Committee - phone: (02) 252 3843.