



and a quarter were principally funded by Australian commercial broadcasters and private investors. Australian private and commercial sources were much more substantial contributors to independent TV drama productions than they were to feature film production.

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A number of very expensive projects in Queensland boosted that state's share of the total value of production occurring in Australia to 35%, above the 29% taken by both NSW and Victoria. This is the first time in the eight years of the survey that NSW has not had the largest share of production activity. However, the share of total production activity accounted for by Queensland production companies was much lower, demonstrating that the Queensland boom still primarily comprises off-shore projects shot at the Gold Coast Warner Roadshow studio, rather than locally-originated ones.

Production industry magazine *Encore* recently quoted Warner Roadshow Studio head Michael Lake saying 'The studio's basically full throughout the year'. He acknowledged the importance of Queensland government assistance measures such as payroll tax rebates on projects where more than \$3.5 million is spent in the State, crew subsidies and the elimination of police, fire and location charges in attracting interstate and off-shore production to Queensland. □

Jock Given

Copies of the survey are available from the Australian Film Commission - (02) 9321 6444; FREECALL 1800 22 6615; Fax (02) 9357 3714; <http://www.afc.gov.au>; email - info@afc.gov.au

Inquiry into local content on pay TV

THE ABA has released an information paper on Australian content on pay TV as the first step in its investigation of these issues. The Minister for Communications and the Arts, Senator Alston, directed the ABA to conduct this investigation on 17 September 1996. In doing so, the Minister was carrying out his obligation under section 215 of the Broadcasting Services Act to conduct a review of Australian content on pay TV before 1 July 1997, including the feasibility of increasing to 20% the level of expenditure required under section 102.

The information paper identifies a number of issues on which the ABA is seeking input:

- the amount, range and type of Australian programming broadcast on pay TV;
- the practical operation of section 102 of the Act - this is particularly significant given the legal difficulties highlighted by the ABA's development of guidelines concerning the operation of the section. These guidelines note the inappropriateness of the current legislative approach to the actual corporate structures being used in the pay TV business;
- the implications of increasing to 20% the level of expenditure required;
- the implications of extending Australian content requirements to all pay TV services, not just predominantly drama services;
- the feasibility of extending to pay TV licensees the same or similar Australian content requirements as presently apply to commercial

television licensees;

- alternative mechanisms for encouraging expenditure on Australian produced programs and for identifying the level of Australian

content in programs transmitted by pay TV licensees; and

- possible legislative models for varying the Australian content obligations on pay TV licensees.

The ABA has requested submissions in its initial consultative process by Wednesday 18 December 1996.

In undertaking its investigation, the ABA

will be assisted by a study being undertaken by the BTCE examining;

- the likely level of expenditure on Australian drama by subscription television broadcast channels if section 102 of the Act had operated as envisaged;
- the capacity of the Australian film and television production industry to supply additional Australian programming; and
- the implications of increased production of Australian content for Commonwealth and State film and television assistance programs.

The review of Australian content on pay TV is happening alongside the Gonski review of film assistance arrangements and the reconsideration of the treatment of New Zealand programs under the Australian content standard, prompted by the legal action taken by New Zealand's Project Blue Sky lobby group [see *CU* 124 p 19, *CU* 125 pp 18-19].

The ABA will make its final report to the Minister by 30 April 1997. □

Jock Given

